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SOUNDGARDEN
Undressed
By Ann Magnuson

GULF WAR
The Media's Shame

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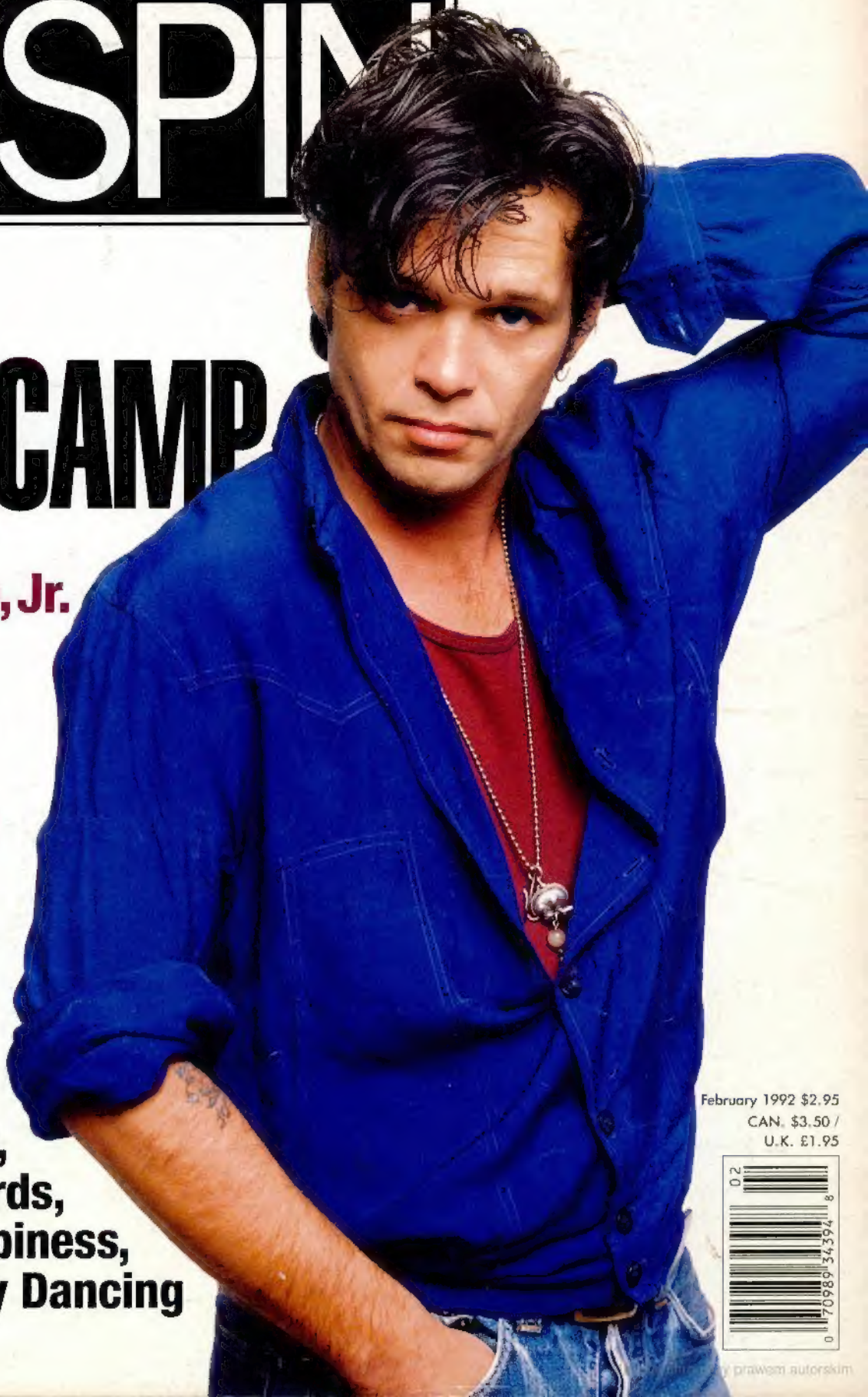
Nitzer Ebb, Voivod, Rock Bottom Awards, Sister Double Happiness, Manchester's Dirty Dancing



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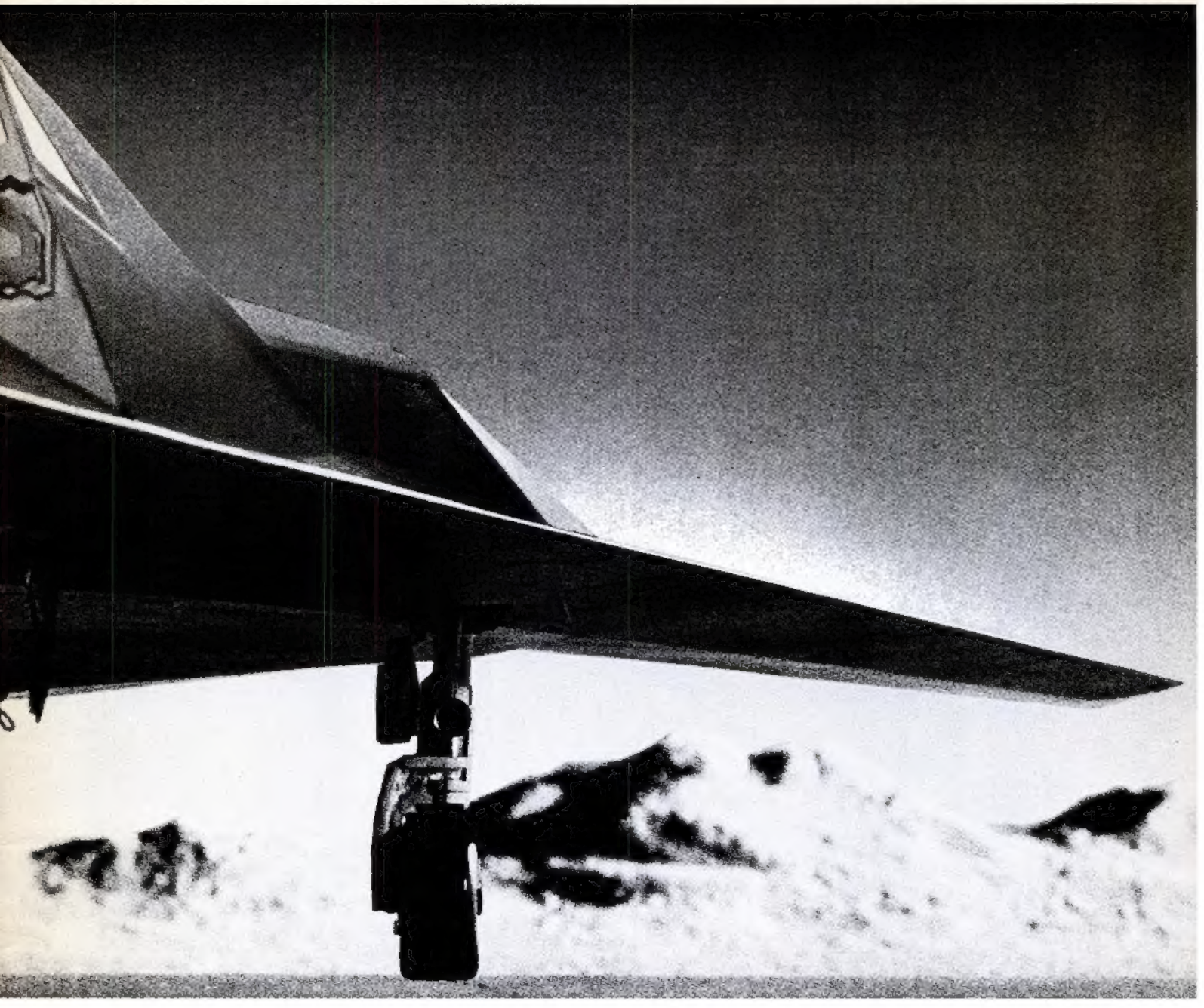

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of Type II tapes, they rated XLII-S, "Head, shoulders and torso above the rest."

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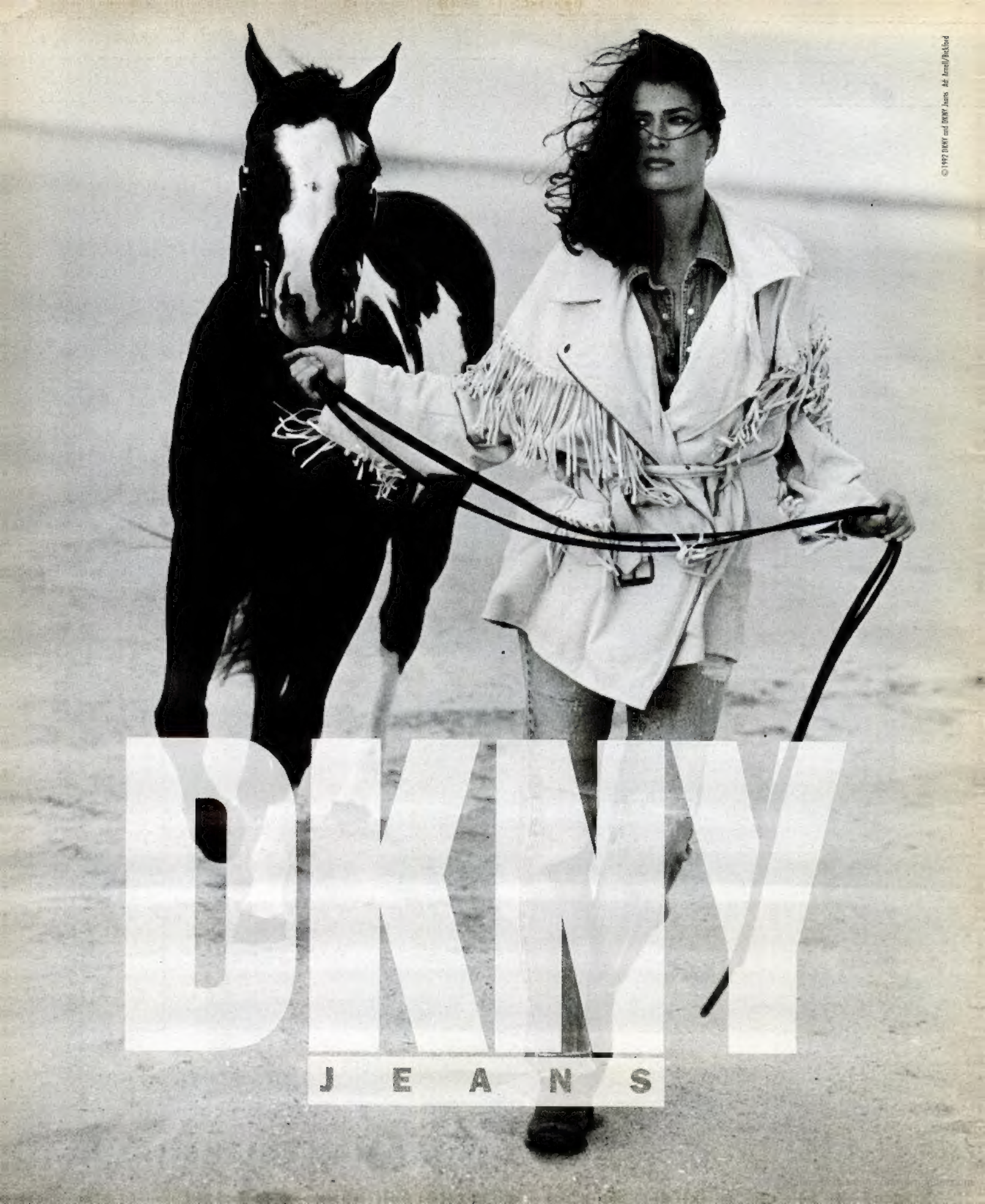

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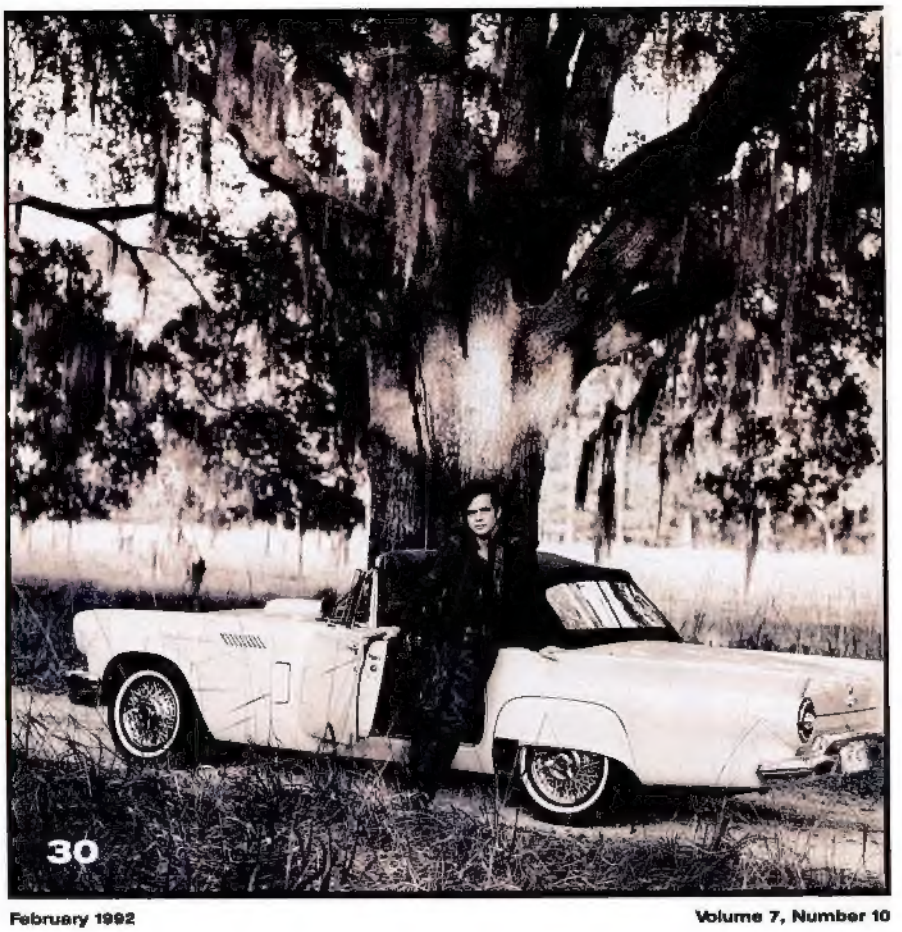

Fanfare for the Common Man, page 30.
Making movies, making moves—heartland rocker John Mellencamp is fueled up and on the road again. Interview by Bob Guccione, Jr.

Readers Poll Ballot, page 52.
The choice is yours! The best, the worst, the biggest, the smallest. SPIN lets the public decide. Just this once.

JESSE FROHMAN

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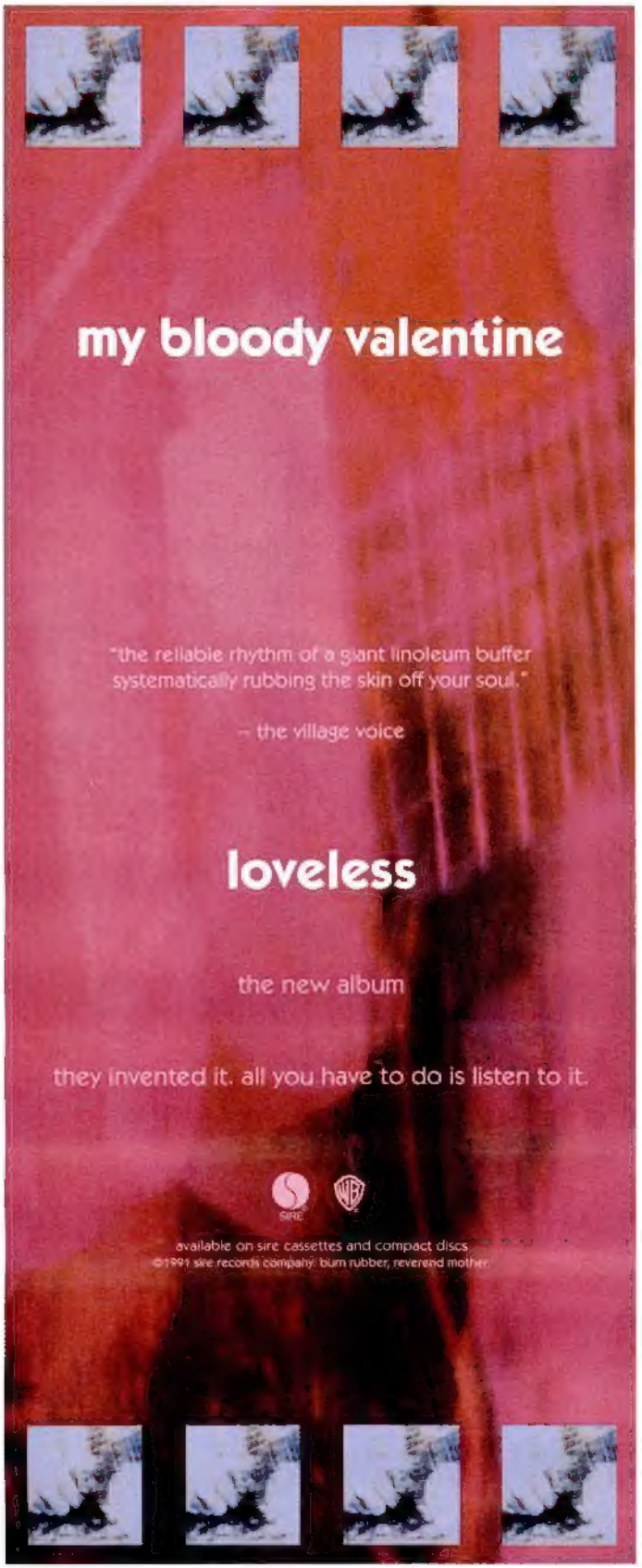
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TALE SPINNERS

For our cover story, **Bob Guccione, Jr.**, spent time with John Mellencamp at his home in Hilton Head, South Carolina (*page 30*). It's the third time Guccione has interviewed the singer. • Multimedia performer **Ann Magnuson** strikes a nerve with Seattle's Soundgarden (*page 42*). Magnuson plays magazine editor Catherine Hughes on ABC's *Anything but Love* and is currently revamping her one-woman show *You Could Be Home Now*, which she performed at Lincoln Center's 1990 Serious Fun! festival. She is also a member of the band Bongwater, which has released five albums, the most recent being *The Big Sell Out*. • On the first anniversary of the Gulf War, independent television producer **Danny Schechter** exposes the way in which our media's war coverage wound up "one-sided and distorted" in this month's Antihero (*page 54*). Schechter produced shows for ABC's *20/20* and CNN before cofounding the harder-hitting Globalvision, Inc., where he now works as executive producer and created the Emmy Award–winning *South Africa Now* series. A global human-rights program, *Rights and Wrongs*, is in the works. • Writer **Wendy Blatt** details the demise of the once-ecstatic Manchester music scene (*page 46*). "I've never seen so many burnouts and casualties in one place," Blatt says. • **James Brown**, a former senior editor at Britain's weekly *New Musical Express*, sums up another British music scene (*page 40*), one now taking off in the United States. "For the first time in ages you can hear new British music every time you turn on the radio," he says. • In this month's Words From the Front column (*page 57*), veteran AIDS reporter **Victoria A. Brownworth** gives us the facts about women and AIDS. "AIDS can no longer be seen as a gay men's disease," she reports. • **Miriam Fishman** illustrated SPIN's Readers Poll ballot (*page 52*). Her artwork has also appeared in *New York* magazine, *Entertainment Weekly*, and *Sports Illustrated*.

Ann Magnuson

Danny Schechter

James Brown

Victoria A. Brownworth

Miriam Fishman

Employee of the Month is Associate Art Director Roger Greiner, who finished our last issue's layout with broken fingers. Let's give him a much-needed hand.

FROM BOTTOM, RODERICK ANGLE, ANDREW GORDON, RUSSELL UNDERWOOD; TOP, MICHAEL LAVINE

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You're no longer stuck
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trees. Glide over hills. Bank
through turns. Slip into a
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TOP SPIN

Ice Cube makes plenty of people see red, but isn't that exactly the point? Look for Cube's fiery, unrepentant interview with Scott Poulson-Bryant in the March 1992 issue of SPIN.

Rapmaster Ice Cube is politically incorrect. Also, he is pissed. With his album *Death Certificate*, he is a phenomenally profitable prophet, speaking, as all genuinely popular art does, for the secret, searching heart-mind rhythms of millions. Most or many of those millions are Americans who are pissed just the way Ice Cube is, standing solid with him. Other millions are pissed at him. For sane, sound reason.

Anti-Semitism and Korean-bashing are what the raging, roaring controversy over *Death Certificate* is all about.

In "Black Korea," the rapper who calls himself "the nigga you love to hate" refers to Korean shopkeepers as "Oriental one-penny-counting motherfuckers." Then in "Horny Lil' Devil" (meaning *whitey*) he raps: "Go down to the corner store and beat the Jap up / Clean all the crap up, outta my city / Now the whole block looks shitty." For the sake of a rhyme, Ice Cube is willing to consider Koreans and Japanese as one race or cause.

And then, in "No Vaseline," there is this: "It's a case of divide and conquer / 'Cause you let a Jew break up my crew."

Death Certificate makes several pejorative mentions of a Jew or Jews. All but one of these references, so far as my ears could perceive, are specific: Jerry Heller, who is Jewish, was manager of N.W.A back when Ice Cube was a member. They had words.

In another line that could be interpreted as broad anti-Semitism, in the same song: "Get rid of that devil real simple / Put a bullet in his temple." If you read synagogue for temple, you might find race hate in that line. Pretty subtle. But the call for homicide is obvious, far from subtle. Rough stuff. There's a lot of rough stuff on *Death Certificate*.

Evil words? For argument's sake, say yes, evil, hateful, homicide-inciting. So stomp the album out? Use the power of government, of economic institutions, of self-righteous private influences to throttle Ice Cube's evil, right?

Wrong.

Make no mistake: The efforts to curb or boycott Ice Cube is heart-and-soul PC-ism. But one thing here should be obvious to even the most locked-tight, rigid-minded practitioner of the thought-control fad called political correctness: Ice Cube, or any survivor of America's black urban depri-plantations, has a lot to be angry about.

Anger is just like gunpowder and pus; the more tightly you try to contain it, the more lethal it becomes. And hate is much the same, though deeper rooted.

Everybody who has ever known a small human person well has figured out that banging a spoon on a highchair is a truly noble experience. That it is precisely what distinguishes small human persons from, say, small turtles.

Never abandon anger, never let go of those spoons. If we do we will discover our souls are stuck to them.

The PC tyrants want to steal both our spoons and our souls. By force, the kind that aspires not just to cage bodies but to imprison minds, to conquer spirits.

The whole glorious, miserable sweep of human history instructs us that when the learned and the powerful tell us what we dare not say, and thus what we *can* say, their pronouncements soon are followed by the rattle of gunfire, the clank of leg irons, the thud of the gallows trap.

You think Ice Cube pisses people off? You should have been around for the Spanish Inquisition, which barbecued legions for doctrinal backsliding. Not many centuries back, unnumbered dissidents—religious, of course, but when religion and politics were synonymous—were hanged and otherwise snuffed as witches. All guilty of political incorrectness.

A mind is a terrible thing to waste, it is said. But is not a wasted voice, a voice stilled or gagged, an even greater loss? Doesn't the act of silencing one voice not only cancel out the mind behind it, but wound foully as well, by default and deprivation, those other minds, perhaps millions, that it might reach and stimulate, outrage, exercise, nourish, energize, lead to light, drive to think, force to rise to a greater, competing wisdom?

Freedom lives only if we are free to be fools and knaves as well as saints.

So if you are being told by someone to be politically correct—be it a teacher, a lover, or the county sheriff—get angry. Get really gut-tearing, eyes-flashing, curbstone-kicking furious. Then draw in your abdominals, narrow your eyes, come to a standstill, and think. Go totally cool. Swear to yourself in a small, sacred prayer of commitment that you will fight those fascists of the mind, those tyrants of the word, with every wile and whit of will within you. Dedicate yourself. Not to killing the messenger, which is too easy and dumb besides. But to slicing into small, transparently stupid, powerless strips the flesh of the arguments of the pious, pompous, poisonous prattlers of political correctness.

Then listen to *Death Certificate*, and get stomping, raging furious again. At Ice Cube. Or about him. Or with him. Whichever way, it doesn't matter. Take that fresh rage and put it to good purpose, as all righteous energy should be. Dedicate that rage to preserving freedom of expression, however abrasive. And while you're at it, celebrate the true, beautiful fact that today, in this very imperfect land, you are free to speak, right or wrong, no difference.

Until the PC police succeed in caging your soul.

—Michael Pakenham

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Corina (Atco) 426-437

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Original Cast—Phantom Of The Opera (Polydor) 424-333

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Rush—Chronicles (Greatest Hits) (Mercury) 423-780/393-785

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Yes—Union (Arista) 417-824

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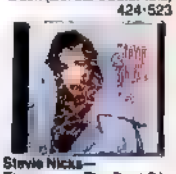

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Alison Moyet—Hoodoo (Columbia) 420-919

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Meat Loaf—Bat Out Of Hell (Epic) 279-133

Steely Dan—Aja (MCA) 277-954

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Boston (Epic) 269-209

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Bruce Springsteen—Born To Run (Columbia) 257-279

Aerosmith—Toys In The Attic (Columbia) 254-912

Santana—Greatest Hits (Columbia) 244 459

Billy Joel—Piano Man (Columbia) 239-863

Janis Joplin—Greatest Hits (Columbia) 231-670

Simon & Garfunkel—Greatest Hits (Columbia) 219-477

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Chris Isaak—Heart Shaped World (Reprise) 386-144

The Monkees—Greatest Hits (Arista) 406-203

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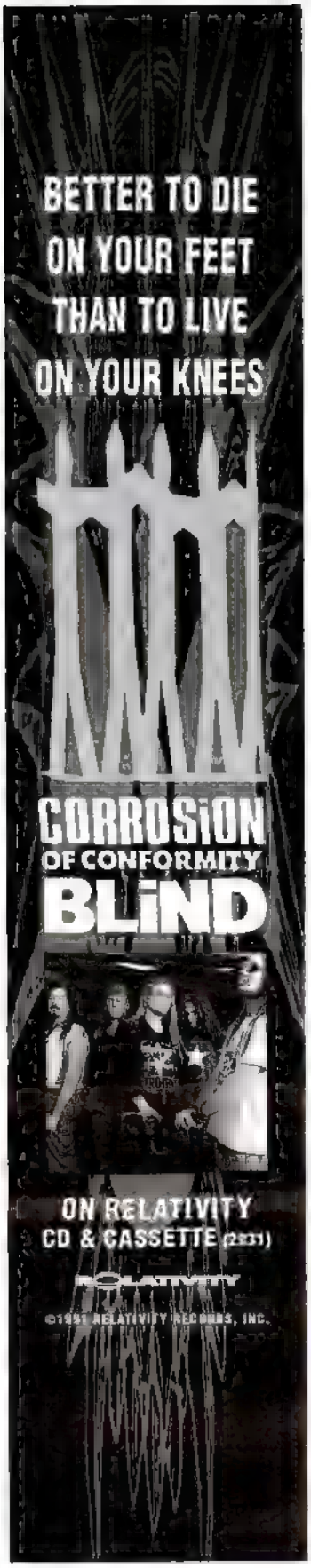

POINT BLANK LETTERS

The Bald and the Beautiful

As a professional substance abuse counselor with a focus on dysfunctional families, a survivor of emotional and verbal abuse, and a part-time blues singer, I gotta say Sinéad really hit the nail on the head ("Special Child," November '91). When I was done reading, I almost looked around to see if Sinéad was available for a hug.

"Jersey Joe" Hamburger
Richmond, Virginia

I hope that Sinéad knows that there are those of us out here who love her dearly and share many of the same convictions. We just have no power to have our voices heard quite so loudly. One thing, though: I also love television. Does that mean we can't be friends?

Scott Bennett
Stevens Point, Wisconsin

Please tell Sinéad O'Connor that she is my best friend. Her courageous expression and perseverance has been a relief and inspiration for those she represents—the oppressed.

Knoelle Power
Tyngsboro, Massachusetts

Sinéad O'Connor said she's never received an offensive letter from anyone—well, here it is. And I hope to piss her off as much as her load of twisted crap offended me.

Steve Schmidt
Hoffman Estates, Illinois

Madonna versus Sinéad? I love conspicuous titillation as much as the next guy, but in the final analysis I'm indifferent to Madonna's body and those of a hundred other MTV nymphettes. Few lyricists, however, can come close to the frighteningly raw sexuality of Sinéad's "Troy" or "Jump in the River." Madonna offers a quick squeeze of the Cowper's gland; Sinéad gives you a mind-expanding orgasm.

Kevin Bartus
Boston, Massachusetts

What could be said about Sinéad O'Connor that hasn't already been said? I was not impressed with her refusal to allow the national anthem to be played before her performance at the Garden State Arts Center. She had some nerve showing disrespect toward a country in which she made a lot of money from album sales and concert performances, a country that has a higher regard for individual freedom than the Irish Republic, I might add. As for her claim that quitting the music business to protest the Gulf War is in the spirit of the revolutionary '60s, let me say that I can't think of one '60s group that quit the business to protest the Vietnam War.

Graham Cowley
Reno, Nevada

The Amnesty-ville Horror?

In 1986 I attended the Conspiracy of Hope concert in Philly. I soon became a believer in the power of rock'n'roll to change an entire screaming stadium into a united voice for justice. So I joined.

Five years later, as an area coordinator for Amnesty International, I spend much of my time doing administrative work. Once in a while we need something to bring us back to what we are all working for. SPIN brought it all back to me with the November issue. The power of music got me into this and it still carries the same spirit and power it did then.

Mariah MacNeil
Richmond, Virginia

On behalf of myself and the others in our local Amnesty International group, as well as the hundreds of thousands of others working for human rights, thank you!

Louise D. Brown-Marsh
Palmdale, California

It can't just be an oversight that the word Palestinian doesn't appear once in a whole issue devoted to human-rights abuses.

Rory Cox
San Francisco, California

While it was horrific and disturbing to read about the tortures and conditions people are forced to endure, not once was it mentioned that lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals are being systematically persecuted in every nation around the world. To take just one example: As a New Year's celebration in Iran, gay men were stoned to death.

Andrew G. Mattocks
Queer Nation
Boston, Massachusetts

Coincidentally, I picked up the November issue at La Guardia Airport while waiting for my flight to join an international human-rights delegation in El Salvador and Guatemala, organized by Central American Mission Partners. Bruce Harris's article touched my heart ["They Shoot Children, Don't They?"], but it barely prepared me for what I experienced.

The morning I visited Casa Alianza's legal office in Guatemala, a child came in for help who had been beaten to unconsciousness the night before by a police officer. The next day nine people were massacred in a bar a few blocks from our hotel.

I strongly urge one to encounter the suffering that exists in the absence of human rights firsthand. It will change your life.

Michele E. Lee
New York, New York

Thank you for the Amnesty issue. I've been an Amnesty International prisoner of conscience since July 1991, when the U.S. government threatened me with the death penalty or a life sentence for refusing duty during the Gulf War. I am a conscientious objector seeking a discharge from the U.S. Marine Corps for my belief that war is a crime against humanity and the planet. It is an international human right to refuse military training and

PHOTO ON LEFT ANTON CORBIJN PHOTO ON RIGHT GREG WATERMANN

to refuse to fight.

Shortly after Amnesty International adopted me as a prisoner of conscience, the charges against me were reduced from desertion in time of war to desertion, missing a troop movement. Through an intense letter-writing campaign and my lawyer's work, the charges were further reduced to unauthorized absence . . . I am encouraged to know that people are watching out for my welfare and working for my release.

I greatly appreciate Amnesty International's recognition of a soldier's right not to kill. I thank Amnesty for all its help.

ERIK LARSEN
CAMP LEJEUNE, NORTH CAROLINA

Editor's note: Larsen has since been sentenced to six months. Support for his appeal can be sent to his parents at 2923 Winchester Drive, Hayward, CA 94541.

Better Red Than Dead

On behalf of the countless families and individuals whose lives have been disrupted by the war in the

Lady Miss Kier gives peace a chance.

the largest war related fund-raising Middle East, I express my deepest gratitude to SPIN magazine for its generous gift to the American Red Cross Gulf Crisis Campaign Fund, effort by the Red Cross since World War II.

Although hostilities have ceased, the Red Cross continues to provide humanitarian services to U S. troops in the Persian Gulf, their families back home, and victims of the conflict. Some of the services being provided include relaying emergency messages to members of the armed forces and their families, providing emergency travel and interest-free loans and grants, and aiding the displaced.

GEORGE F MOODY
CHAIRMAN, AMERICAN RED CROSS
WASH NGTON, D C

Editor's note: And thanks to all the readers who contributed to the Red Cross through their purchase of Fashion for Peace T shirts [Fashion for Peace, April '91].

Murder, They Wrote

The discussion of the death penalty by Celia Farber and Staci Bonner ["An Eye for an Eye," November '91] is by far the best-written and most intelligent article I have ever read in SPIN. It is through courageous journalists such as these that Americans will realize that the death penalty is dead wrong.

MIMI HANNON
PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA

Rapmaster

Your hip hop coverage is unequaled. In my college days your articles on Public Enemy and Boogie Down Productions were used as primary sources in my senior seminar. Your magazine is a cut above, and I urge your staff to keep the focus on hip hop strong. I enjoy reading a magazine that can feature John Mellencamp, the Five Percent Nation, and rap in general

BRUCE NEGR N
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Credit Where It's Due

In our December issue, the photograph of Shaun Stüssy on page 58 was taken by Paula S. Henry, and the photographs accompanying "Mixed Emotions," our story about antiabortion activism in Wichita, were courtesy of Worldwide Photos.

Address letters to: Point Blank, SPIN, 6 West 18th Street, New York, NY 10011. Include your name and daytime phone number for verification. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

SHAMEN

En-Tact

Featuring the No. 1 dance smash and Top-5 Alternative hit, "Move Any Mountain (Progen 91)."

"'En-Tact' seethes with imagination... delivering a sound that is truly their own: an undulating prayer of physical seduction." - SELECT

"Of all the new bands, The Shamen are the most indicative of what new British music is all about." - MIKE EDWARDS, JESUS JONES

epic

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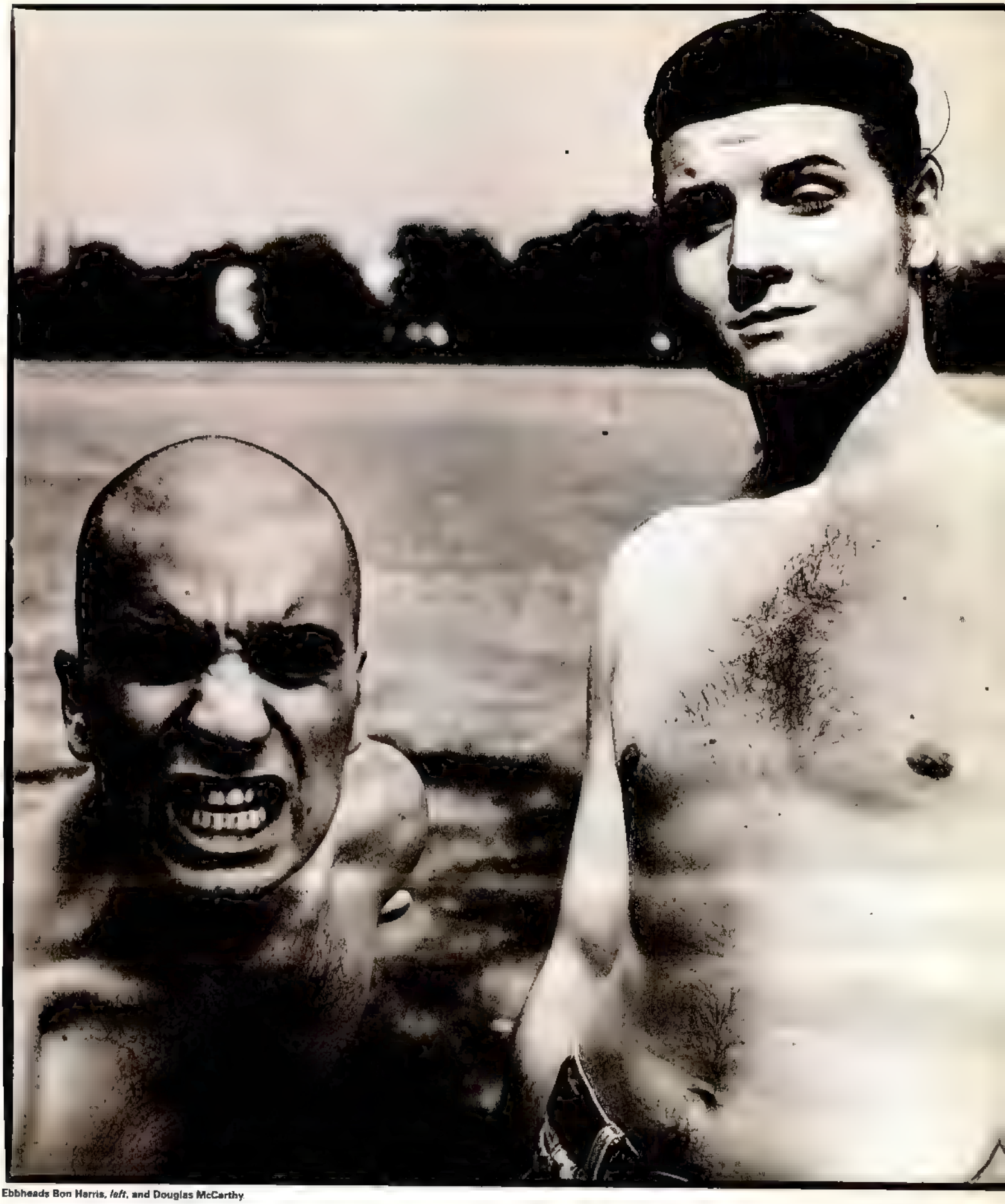
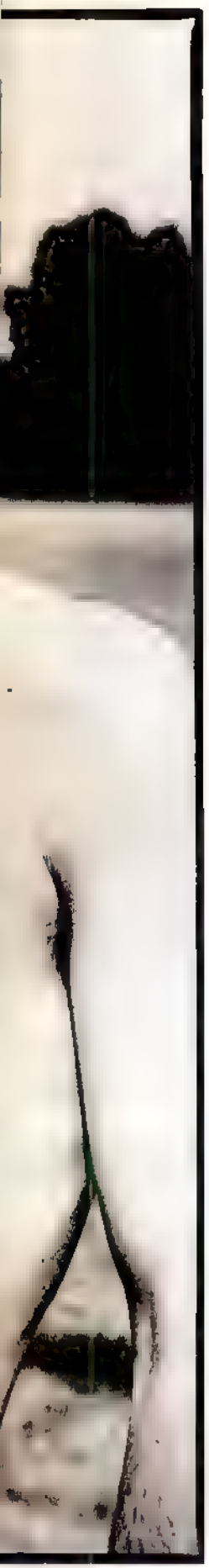


Ebbheads Bon Harris, *left*, and Douglas McCarthy



hard-boiled ebb

Having ushered in dance music's industrial revolution, Nitzer Ebb packs up its tools and takes a crack at pop craftmanship.

For its fourth album, sardonically titled *Ebbhead*, Nitzer Ebb decided to try something new: writing songs.

"We appreciate that it's what bands have been doing for years," admits the vocal half of the British duo, Douglas McCarthy, without a hint of irony. "But we've never gone into that territory. It's something quite exciting for us."

The question then follows: If not writing songs, what *has* Nitzer Ebb been doing over the past seven years?

Arguably, creating new genres. Shortly after its inception as an electronic trio in 1984 (now consisting of only McCarthy and programmer Bon Harris), Nitzer Ebb began marrying the aggression of genuine industrial sounds—sheet metal and all—with the relentless drive of digital beats. Their "songs," as such, were a minimalist combination of angry chants and fierce rhythms that found friends on many a dance floor: "Join in the Chant," from the 1987 debut, *That Total Age*, became a staple both on Britain's acid house scene and in America's industrial clubs, where Nitzer Ebb's angst-ridden sound has been an influence on the likes of Nine Inch Nails.

"We began to get bored of the narrow scope that the first two albums gave," explains McCarthy. "And there were so many other bands that copied that style, we felt encroached upon and wanted to move on."

This restlessness first showed on 1990's *Showtime*, which injected more melody while maintaining the hard-edged dance appeal. The combination worked: U.S. sales hit a cool 200,000, and it became hard to hit the streets without seeing teenagers wearing T-shirts or caps with the group's vivid red and black logo.

This elevated cult status was also thanks largely to a stadium tour with Mute Records labelmates Depeche Mode. McCarthy describes the group's reception at these concerts: "There were fourteen-year-olds there who had no idea what makes an alternative band or what makes a pop band. They were seeing us, thinking, 'Yeah, that's great,' and they didn't really make any differentiation between us and Depeche Mode. That made us realize it's possible to get through to people."

Hence *Ebbhead*, which followed close on the heels of an EP, *As Is*; while still mostly electronic, the new disc no doubt confused a lot of hard-core Nitzer nuts with its shift away from industrial dance toward pure songs. For that, the group makes no apology.

"We're not frightened of moving away from things we're no longer interested in," says McCarthy. "We love our fans, but ultimately we're doing this 'cause its what we wanna do."

Nitzer Ebb seems to rejoice in perversity: A remix of *Ebbhead*'s "I Give to You" bizzarely replaced all the beats with strings. The duo's current antagonism toward the dance craze is further detailed in the song "DJVD," an attack on DJs-turned-producers like Paul Oakenfold (Happy Mondays) and Andy Weatherall (Primal Scream).

"As DJs they were great—they were the first to ever play Nitzer Ebb in London in fact," explains McCarthy. "Then they started moving up to these producer kind of figures, and it seems like it's going back to the '50s, when there was one producer who stamped every band with his identity. It's ridiculous that any band allows itself to be given over to one guy's vision."

Denying this attitude is in any way sour grapes because the British dance scene has passed them by, the Ebbmen see their contrariness merely as a desire to stay one step ahead.

"To us Nitzer Ebb represents a different way of looking at music—a way of trying to not just be the standard, to not just be the normal. Everything we do should be able to surprise people."

TONY FLETCHER

Right Said Fred "I'm Too Sexy" (Charisma). "I'm too sexy for my shirt / Too sexy for my shirt / So sexy it *hurts* . . ." This 12-inch, along with its video, is the most inescapable assault on mass consciousness since "Gypsy Woman." Prepare to be impaled on a throbbing slice of masculinity courtesy of three roughnecks who've already had Mick Jagger down on all fours (they were once his trainers). Lie back and enjoy it. (The Entire Staff)

Jim Carroll *Praying Mantis* (Giant). A collection of spoken-word performances or poetry or whatever by this New York wise man who has dabbled in basketball, heroin addiction, male prostitution, writing (*The Basketball Diaries*, *Living at the Movies*), and rocking (*Catholic Boy*, *Dry Dreams*). His songs are about weird sex, assorted drugs, and people who died, and these pieces are brimming with the same. This guy is one twisted puppy (Blackwell)

Chapterhouse *Mesmerise* (Dedicated). England's top "shoe-gazers" raise their sights and look at the stars on this surprising EP. An assured groove and gently mesmeric piano sweep engagingly over a minor classic of English whimsy—Brideshead with a beatbox. Unlike most of their contemporaries, these boys just might have a future. (Daly)

HEAVY ROTATION

STAFF SELECTIONS

Love Tractor *Love Tractor/'Til the Cows Come Home* (DB). This CD reissue documents the early '80s period of one of Athens, Georgia's finest combos. Less commercial in intent than more famous peers R.E.M — the early stuff was instrumental only — but similar in style, Love Tractor always deserved more attention than they got. Now's your chance to make it up to them. (Greer)

Thin White Rope *The Ruby Sea* (Frontier). A little like the Cramps jamming with Nick Cave in a cowboy bar. If the country-punk movement that threatened to take over the world a few years ago (Gun Club, the Dils) had actually succeeded, this release would fit into the category quite well. There's a twang in them thar' hills that'll have you hankerin' for some moonshine. (Spencer)

Various Artists *Ultra-House: The L.A. Connection* (Wax Trax). This collection of intoxicating and devilish house music was orchestrated by Psychic TV—compiled by its Genesis P. Orridge—and it shows. Mind-blowing rhythms abound, and the tranced-out songs are called "tabs." The best cut, White Dove's "The Eagle Has Landed," bubbles with pagan vibrations. Albert Hofmann is thanked on the liner notes for "various supplies and materials." (Bonner)

Biz shows his favorite sneaks.

JACKIN' FOR BEATS

I'm gonna git this beat from *Godzilla vs. Megalon*," says rapper Biz Markie with glee. "You know that beat? Woo-ooo! Sorry to waste your time like this, but . . ."

Far from wasting my time, the Biz (né Marcel Hall) is giving me a lesson in the art of finding "beats," i.e., three- to four-second patches of music danceable enough to sample and loop into rhythm tracks. To this end, he fast-forwards through the Godzilla video until he finds a swatch of incidental music accompanying a chase scene. "You hear that beat! Oh God!"

This obscure movie, in which the overblown ape has karate battles with a robot, is just one of the unlikely places Biz gets his stuff. Karate flicks, cartoons, video games, Benny Hill episodes, and regular ol' movies will do as well. ("You heard the *Dirty Harry* beat?!")

Of course, records are the main source of beats, and not just the '60s soul and '70s funk cuts that you'd expect to contain groovy grooves. "The song 'Home Bound' on *Cat Scratch Fever* by Ted Nugent is one of my favorites," he claims, without an ounce of hipster irony. "And that *Foghat Live*. God is that funky!"

Realistically, only record maniacs like Biz can be expected to know that, for example, the badass jam on Public Enemy's "Bring the Noise" comes from "It's My Thing" by Marva Whitney. So in order to help you get started source-locating—gathering sampling factoids to impress your friends—the Biz lists his top ten faves of both oft-used and obscure rock and break beats:

Rapper Biz Markie rates the best rock and break beats.

Classic Break Beats:

"Impeach the President," Honeydrippers • "Funky President (People It's Bad)," James Brown • "Ain't We Funky Now," Brothers Johnson • "Do the Funky Penguin," Rufus Thomas • "I Can't Stop," John Davis and the Monster Orchestra • "Substitution," Melvin Bliss • "It's My Thing," Marva Whitney • "Hand Clapping Song," The Meters • "Heartbeat," War • "A New Day," Skull Snaps ("No, man, don't tell 'em that," says Biz's partner, Cool V. "Don't worry, they'll never find it," says Biz.)

Classic Rock Beats:

"Big Beat," Billy Squier • "Love Stinks," J. Geils Band • "Baby Come Back," Player • "When the Levee Breaks," Led Zeppelin • "Jack and Diane," John Mellencamp • "Tom Sawyer," Rush • "Stiletto," Billy Joel • "You Turn My Light On," Kenny Rogers • "Queen Bee," Barbra Streisand • "Godzilla," Blue Öyster Cult

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What'll I give my sweetheart on Valentine's Day?
Leo G. Minot, ND

Well, I've give a whole lot of girls a good many different doodads on Valentine's Day, so I'm a real good man to ask a question like that to. First of all, like my daddy used to say, "Flowers ain't worth snot on a log." All they do is stink up the house and draw bees through the screen door. Candy's all right, but next thing you know your gal's fat as the broad side of a barn. If you want to splurge and she's a good'un that does you right and you ain't never caught her laying down with the man next door or nobody, I suggest getting her a dog or something of that sort. But if she ain't so special, just get her a nice cheeseburger and wrap it up in some fancy paper with hearts and all on it. If she don't cotton to dogs or is one of them damn vegetarians, I don't know what to say. Smells like teen spirit, Ely.

RADIO GRAFFITI

tim dog

Yo, let me start by sayin' that 2 cutz on Tim Dog's *Penicillin on Wax*—"Bronx Nigga" 'n' "Step to Me" are dope, but tha rest of tha album iz garbage! I played tha tape right after I heard 3rd Bass's Pete Nice say he wuz down wit' tha TD, but I can't tell tha difference between Tim Dog 'n' N.W.A! How did he get tha title "Best in the East"? I'm a Bronx nigga, too, but I wouldn't slap that type uh crap on wax. Although sum traks iz jak, Tim can't rhyme to bak hiz rep! I threw tha piece uh schitt right out my Mercedes window! Tha only problem iz some other sucker'll pick it up and blast it on tha avenue!

And why tha @%&* do you think he disses Compton on hiz record? It'z a setup, jacky! Jus' ta sell albums! I saw tha stinkin' Dog at a show 'n' he sed he wazn't talkin' 'bout tha city itself, but waz dissin' N.W.A. So why duz he say, "Talkin' about a B.S city / Talkin' about niggaz from Compton"!? This type of hypocritical spoo iz tha reason I became a critic. Tim'z gimmik will still get him over 'n' put some buks in hiz poket, and that'z tha name-a-tha-game, I guess. He probably used tha contract money to buy cars, clothes, jewlz, et cetera, and put jus a coupla pennies into tha production. (I think that scam'z startin' to catch on.) The worst thing that could happen now iz if thay give him tha keyz to tha citiez of tha East 'n' make him tha king! God help us—we don't need another Ice-T!

BÖNZ MALONE

"Best in the East": Tim Dog out West in L.A.

FRANK OCKENFELS 3

From left, Andrew Polin, Amr Zaid, and Simon Day.

RATS DOWN UNDER

Just a year ago, Ratcat was leading the typical alternative band existence in its hometown of Sydney, Australia. With its frantic, grungy, and simple melodic rock, the group had built up a reasonable following as a local live attraction, and its records were doing fairly well on independent charts.

How life has changed for this trio. Now Simon Day, Amr Zaid, and Andrew Polin are stars, and Ratcat is the Next Big Thing in Australian rock. The transformation largely occurred when "That Ain't Bad" (from 1990's *Tingles* EP) was heavily requested on radio and TV. By the time Ratcat was asked to join INXS's 1991 *X* tour in Australia, the song had hit No. 1 on the mainstream Australian charts, and had been trailed there by the follow-up, "Don't Go Now." Its new album *Blind Love* entered the Australian charts in the No. 1 position.

Ratcat's songs are basic and noisy statements of love. Onstage the band lacks the slickness of more seasoned acts such as INXS, but lead singer Simon Day suspects that this might be the key to Ratcat's appeal, especially among those looking for a fresh vitality in their rock stars. And that's what you get from Ratcat, which has been likened to a cartoon version of the Ramones—and Crowded House on speed.

Ratcat is now looking beyond its home turf, recently touring with the English band Ride, and playing college gigs in the U.S. Now the big question is whether the band will go on to emulate the success of fellow countrymen such as Midnight Oil and INXS. Simon Day remains decidedly unflustered by this prospect. And that's a very good sign.

LAWRENCE ZION

LOST IN AMERICA

Boston: The Axis club. "Ladies and gents, the world's tallest band!" A mass of lanky limbs and long hair bounds on stage: six-feet-six-inch guitarist and vocalist Lucas Janklow, six-feet-four-inch rhythm guitarist Nate Schrock, six-feet three-inch bassist Gerry Stanek, and five-feet-ten-inch drummer (shorter, but seated anyway) Frank Araneo. This is the Lost—a spicy, bluesy, George Thorogood-ish, no-frills rock band.

The audience's front line is a tightly packed frenzy of young women, cameras clicking, mouths slavishly lip-synching lyrics. Most are totally in awe. Janklow is comfortable with the hype, emitting a down-to-earth, smiling purity. After years of studying the likes of Jimmy Page and Jimi Hendrix, seasoned with blues and hardcore, he assembled this band with serious intent. "It took a long time to find people who really wanted to play music rather than just ride in limos," he quips.

The Lost has been touring for over a year, playing with everyone from the Ramones to Mr. Big. After this set, the band packs for the trek to home base Manhattan. A guy grabs Janklow: "Man, my girlfriend always drags me to shows I don't wanna see, but you guys turned me on! You play some kick-ass rock'n'roll!" Janklow's thrilled. The Lost is being found.

ANITA SARKO

From left, Nate Schrock, Lucas Janklow, Frank Araneo, and Gerry Stanek.

SHINY HAPPINESS PEOPLE

Gary Floyd, Sister Double Happiness's paunchy lead singer, has been tagged San Francisco's premier Hindu love god—even though he's originally from Austin, Texas. "I'm not a traitor to the Austin cause," says Floyd, assuredly. "I have no sort of sappy loyalty to anyplace, including San Francisco. I certainly don't plan to die there."

His band's new album, *Heart and Mind*, is an indie-to-major-label success story, but that doesn't mean the band has changed its rambunctious style to satisfy the suits. "It seems like things have gone the other way, actually," explains guitarist Ben Cohen. Floyd adds his bit of monkish wisdom (having spent time in a Hindu monastery): "The major record labels aren't signing alternative bands because they're nice. They're signing 'em up because they're making so much money off 'em."

From left, Lynn Perko, Ben Cohen, Gary Floyd, and Jeff Palmer.

Floyd's songwriting is a mix of early-'70s power chords and California power tripping. From "Sweet-Talker," a Led Zeppelin-style slide boogie, to "Bobby Shannon," the apocryphal tale of a transcendental pooch with a heart of gold, Sister Double Happiness's output remains decidedly eclectic. The band has also made unexpected audience inroads recently, touring with fellow decibel aficionados Nirvana and Soundgarden. Sister Double Happiness is finding its newfound fame wonderful but time-consuming, as evidenced by drummer Lynn Perko's testament to life on the road: "We listen to a lot of books on tape."

ALEC FOEGE

bloody valentine's day

You wouldn't expect the half-British, half-Irish pop-surrealist messiahs of the moment to name their band after a schlocky American horror flick, would you? Well, My Bloody Valentine didn't plan it that way either.

"We were just having a laugh when the name was suggested," recalls guitarist-vocalist Kevin Shields. "We'd never heard of the movie. It just sounded like a funny name. Then I found out about the film and saw it. I hated it."

My Bloody Valentine has turned out to be a fitting name for the group. Since 1984 MBV has perfected a sound that caresses the senses, rushes blood to the temples and groin alike, and draws its musical pinks and reds from veins, wines, and roses.

From left, Belinda Jayne Butcher, Kevin Shields, Colm O'Ciosoig, and Deb Googe.

Some three years in the making, the new album, *Loveless*, is My Bloody Valentine's most sensually compelling work to date, making good on the ethereal yet sticky promise of the band's two U.S. EPs, 1990's *Glider* and 1991's *Tremolo*.

"We messed around in the studio a hell of a lot," Shields says. "We realized time and money don't really mean anything when it comes to making a good record. We'd listen to a track and not like it, then not go back to it for months. It was pretty indulgent, but it taught us some valuable lessons."

STEVE MARTIN

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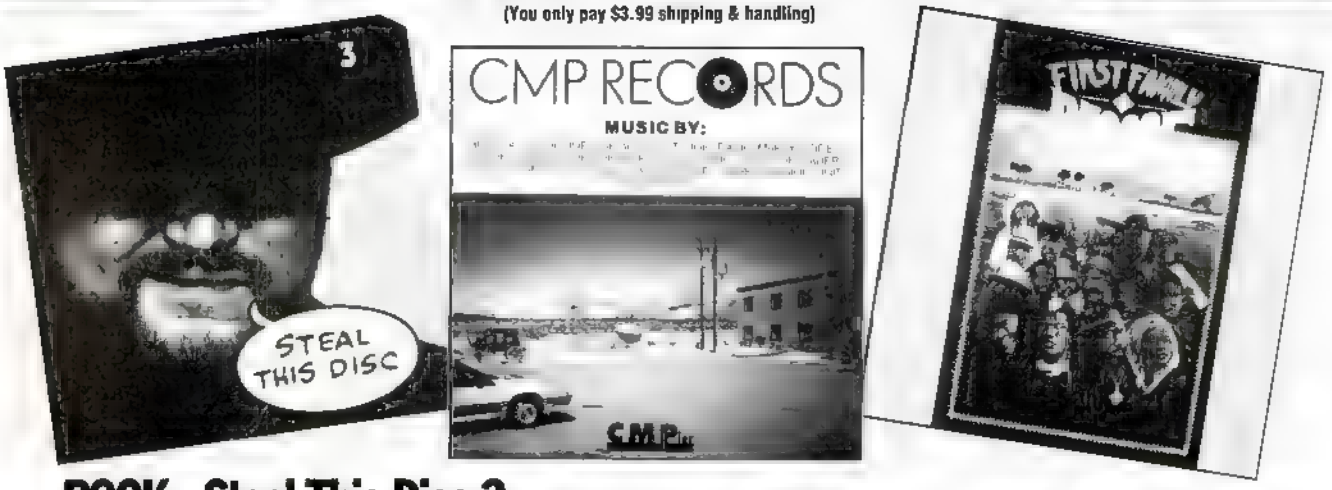

ROCK - Steal This Disc 3

Ryko's new 23 cut disc includes Nils Lofgren's new "Silver Lining" (Stereo Review's best new recording of the month 5/91) plus guitar heros Jimi Hendrix, Evan Johns and Frank "You Can't Do That On Stage" Zappa. David Bowie contributes "Heroes" in both English and German, The Jolly Boys provide the reggae and there's World Music from 3 Mustaphas 3 and Mouth Music. There's more too...John and Mary (10,000 Maniacs), Jeff Walker, Chris Wall, Bad Finger, Dave Stewart and even an ex-Beatle, Ringo Starr and his All Star Band all take turns plus, Devo, Barking Tribe, Hex and more cover the cutting edge. To get your almost Free copy of Steal This Disc 3, fill out the coupon below and send it along with $3.99 for S&H per disc. (55328)

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- ❑ **Teldec** – *Classics International.* A sampler of new releases from the Teldec label. Includes selections from Wagner, Haydn, Tchaikovsky, Mozart, Strauss, Dvorak, Handel, Bach, Beethoven and more. (61539) (Please enclose $3.99 per disc for S&H.)

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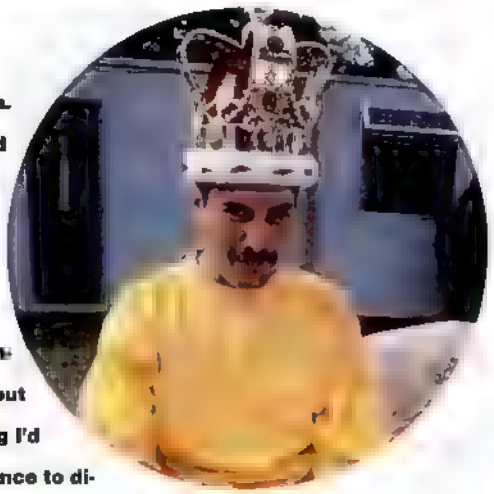
SPIN02

Spin Patrol

The Humpty Jaywalk: Tupac Amaru Shakur (a.k.a 2Pac) of Digital Underground has filed a $10 million lawsuit against the City of Oakland Police Department. He claims that officers stopping him for jaywalking, choked him, beat his head on the pavement, and then charged him with resisting arrest. • **Idol Hands Are the Tools of the Devil:** Rocker Billy Idol was arrested for assaulting a female companion in a West Hollywood restaurant. Idol, who was wearing metal rings, allegedly hit the woman in the face for no apparent reason. • **Still Crazy After All These Years in Jail:** G.G. Allin was nabbed by Orlando, Florida, cops for exposing himself and defecating onstage at a spoken-word performance. Allin, who is in violation of his Michigan parole, has also allegedly incited riots in California and wreaked havoc at New York University. • **Penis Envy Revisited:** Members of the Virginia hardcore band Cockring, locally famous for their songs "Slut" and "Red-Neck Inbred Local Cops," face fines for putting up band posters that featured partially naked, well-endowed cartoon characters. • **We All Won't Be Received in Graceland:** Officials at Graceland briefly detained Ugly Kid Joe lead singer Whitfield Crane for exposing his genitals while posing for a photo in front of the King's humble abode. • **Get in the Ring—Then Wait Forever:** Guns N' Roses has instituted a mandatory *two-hour* delay between its opening act, Soundgarden, and its own performance. We'd rather be arrested.—*Compiled by Mark Blackwell*



Freddie Mercury, ultraflamboyant lead singer of Queen, dies of AIDS at the age of 45.

The Queen Is Dead: Freddie's dead, but his legacy lives on. Not just in "Ice Ice Baby," Metallica's cover of "Stone Cold Crazy," or George Michael's faux-'50s leather fetish. And not just in Jane's Addiction's similar eccentric-with-a-power-trio chemistry, or Nine Inch Nails' funky industrial cover of "Get Down, Make Love" at Lollapalooza. Hearing NIN belt out Queen was a revelation. I bolted for the mosh pit and got about a minute's worth of something I'd always wanted to do: slam dance to dinosaur rock. • In my youth, I despised some rock critics' tendency to dis and dismiss prog rock. Nowadays I can hardly complain, as kids haven't inherited the anti-'70s zeal of their older siblings. Nevertheless, I still chafed at Dave Marsh's *Rolling Stone* review of *Jazz* that branded Queen "the first truly fascist rock band." It wasn't so much the stupid review that bugged me—it was its effect on smarty-pants youngsters. I once argued with a kid who cavalierly called Queen fascist. I asked him what he meant, and he couldn't tell me. • If by fascist you mean "We Will Rock You"–esque music capable of stirring athletic arenas full of fans into electric frenzies, then you never played sports as a kid. If by fascist you mean Freddie's jackboot getups, then you're a homophobe and a pedant. Listen kid, Queen was lots of things, but not fascist. The first concert I ever saw—in 1977 at age 13—was Queen. I wasn't manipulated, just entertained. You want fascism? Turn on MTV and do an aerobics workout. That's fascism.—*Bob Mack*

Amnesty Corner

In our November 1991 issue, guest-edited by Amnesty International's Jack Healey, SPIN pledged to work for the release of six specific prisoners of conscience. Each month we update you on the status of these victims and ask you to write letters of support for one (or more) of your choice—in effect your own adopted prisoner of conscience—or to contact Amnesty International, U.S.A. (322 Eighth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10001; tel. 1-800-55-AMNESTY) to find out how you can help. Protest works. Volumes of protest works better, faster.

Good news this month: A.I. has just received information that Nguyen Chi Thien was released from prison in Vietnam. Further details on the release of this poet, who has spent over half his life behind bars simply for writing about his beliefs, are awaited. January 30 is Orton Chirwa's 73rd birthday. To send birthday greetings write: Zomba Central Prison, Box 28, Zomba, Malawi. A.I. requests that you do *not* mention Amnesty International in this particular case.

Please support our efforts to free the remaining five prisoners. Every letter counts.

José Ramón García
Lic. Carlos Salinas de Gortari; Presidente de la Republica; Palacio Nacional; 06067 Mexico DF, Mexico

Riad al-Turk
President Hafez al-Assad; Presidential Palace; Damascus; Syrian Arab Republic

Orton Chirwa and Vera Chirwa
H.E. the Life President Ngwazi Dr. Kamuzu Banda; Life President of the Republic of Malawi; Office of the President and Cabinet; Private Bag 388; Lilongwe 3, Malawi

Aung San Suu Kyi
General Saw Maung, Chairman; State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC); c/o Ministry of Defense; Signal Pagoda Road; Yangon, Union of Myanmar (Burma)

NEAL PRESTON/OUTLINE

Yo ho ho and a transmitter: radio pirate Mbanna Kantako.

pirate of the projects

An outlaw radio station keeps a community awake and informed.

Mbanna Kantako may be blind, but he keeps close watch on his community. With a little help from his friends—and a one-watt transmitter that covers a one-and-a-half-mile radius—Kantako runs a pirate radio station from his living room in Springfield, Illinois. He also heads an organization called Black Liberation Radio, a group of unlicensed stations that serve as community information centers. Since 1986 this band of frequency thieves has shared tips on survival in the projects.

Kantako's station, 101.7 FM, broadcasts material such as Malcolm X speeches and police abuse alerts. He says it was created to give John Hay Homes, a 600-unit public housing development with an 87 percent unemployment rate, a "source of information that people could turn to to learn what they weren't taught in school and won't see on TV."

Long before Daryl Gates was a household word, Kantako was fighting what he calls a mini police state. Although words mean little when police are actually confronted ("You can't ask the fox if he stole the hen eggs, even when he has yolk on his mouth," Kantako explains), his broadcasts serve to link the people of the community, keeping them wary of abuses. He says the fact that the police walk a straighter line on his turf makes it worthwhile.

Kantako claims he's received a great deal of harassment, including eviction threats, and recently someone fired a bullet through his front window while he was broadcasting. In April 1989, he was fined $750 by the FCC for operating without a license. According to FCC officials, there have been no recent reports of Kantako's operation, and that as far as they know, he's off the air. They're wrong.

"This station still exists," says Kantako, "because the community *demands* that it does."

MARY ANN MARSHALL

TOP PHOTO: JOHN WILKES; PHOTO ON RIGHT: NANCY LEOPARDI

SOME WHOLESOME HOLES

"We pierce our customers with their long - term well-being in mind," says professional body piercer Drew Nicholas, who works at San Francisco's Gauntlet, a business that has punctured body parts for over 15 years. "We perform the role of shamans in the '90s."

Piercings aren't as painful as you might think. In fact, no anesthesia is needed if they're done right. They're also cheap—about $25. And if you get several at one sitting, they're $10 each after the first. The jewelry—rings and trinkets to decorate the holes—can be more costly.

Since piercing isn't for the squeamish, Gauntlet soothes its customers nerves by educating them with detailed written and video instructions. From time to time, Nicholas and Gauntlet owner Jim Ward travel cross-country giving piercing "clinics." Gauntlet also offers a video series called *Pierce With a Pro* for those who want to perforate in the privacy of their own homes.

Gauntlet's target body areas have always included nostrils, tongues, and nipples. Their target customer, however, has changed. "The majority used to be in the gay community," says Nicholas. "Now it's also people with six-figure incomes and three-piece suits." Nicholas reports that the most popular genital piercing is still the Prince Albert, a ring through the urethra that takes four to six weeks to completely heal.

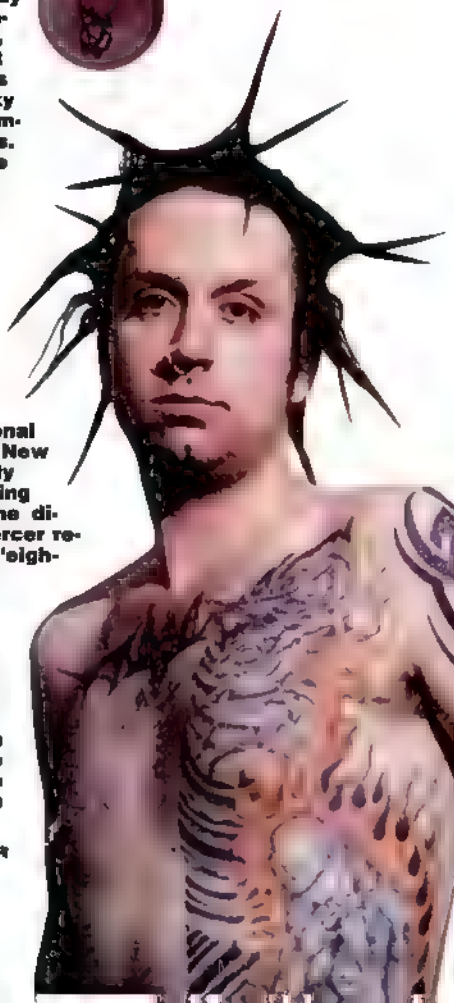
East Coast customers now have their own "professional piercing emporium." A New York Gauntlet recently opened to overwhelming response—and the same diverse clientele. One piercer reported working on both "eighteen-year-old kids with mohawks and seventy-year-old men with business suits."

Piercing is "a spiritual experience, a rite of passage," according to Nicholas. "If it's done right, it can provide a lifetime of pleasure. I've yet to see someone leave here without a smile."

STACI BONNER

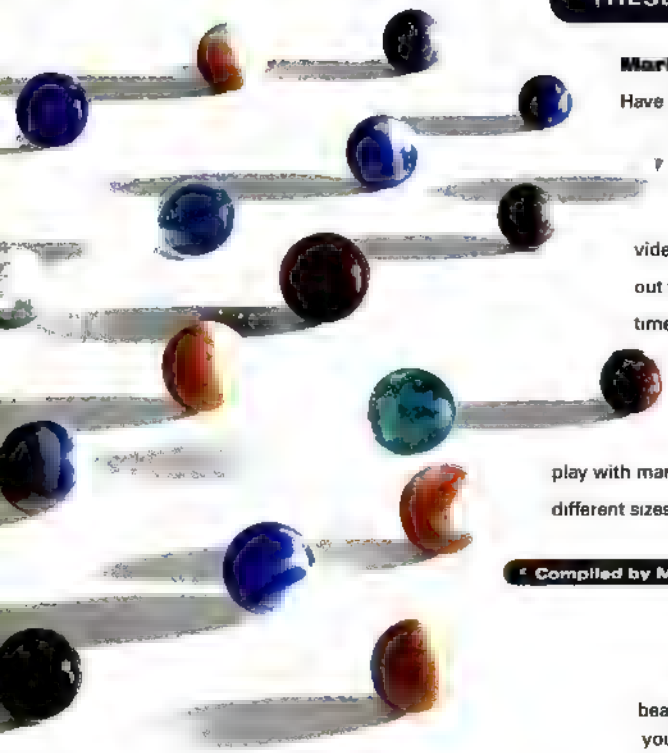
Not enough holes in your bod? If you've got the body part—

from head to toe—it can probably be pierced.



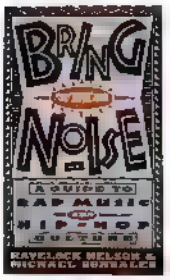
THE COLD ROCK STUFF

THESE ARE A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE THINGS



Marbles

Have you lost your marbles? We hope not. With all the fancy, complex, computerized, aerospace, microwave, video, robot, high-tech toys and games out these days, we think it's just about time to get back to basics. You don't need batteries, joysticks, microchips, TV sets, or even a college degree to play with marbles. And they come in all different sizes and lots of neat colors, too.

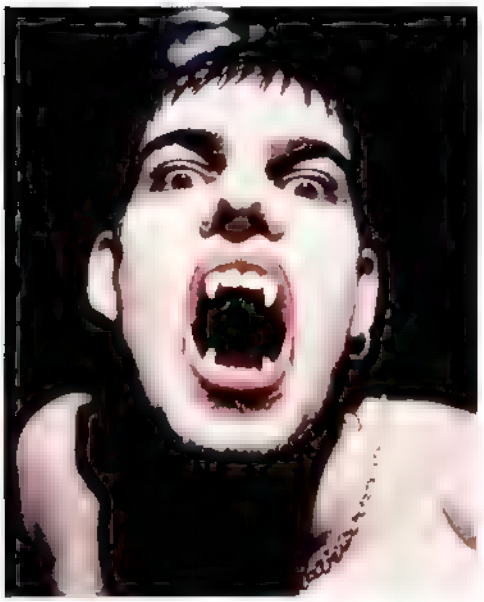


Bring the Noise: A Guide to Rap Music and Hip-Hop Culture
Rap authorities Havelock Nelson and Michael A. Gonzales have put together this refreshing up-to-the-minute reference (published by Harmony Books) on the ever-growing, ever-important hip hop nation. It's witty, sly, streetwise, and full of funky anecdotes and bios on everyone from A to Y—Audio Two to Young MC. Pay attention to their Essential 25 List of rap LPs necessary for any collection

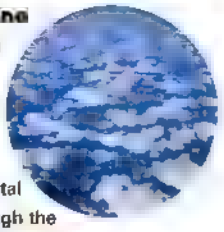
Compiled by Mark Blackwell, Staci Bonner, Scott Poulson-Bryant, Daniel Fidler, and Roger J. Greiner

Vampires

Vampires may actually exist, according to Rosemary Ellen Guiley's *Vampires Among Us* (Pocket Books) and Carol Page's *Blood Lust* (HarperCollins). Both books feature tons of interviews with people who sleep in coffins, wear 15 + sunblock every day, and think that drinking blood is better than sex. If that's too hard-core to contemplate, you can just read Anne Rice's fiction, or even tamer, Ballantine Books' comic book version of her novel *The Vampire Lestat.*



Dream Machine

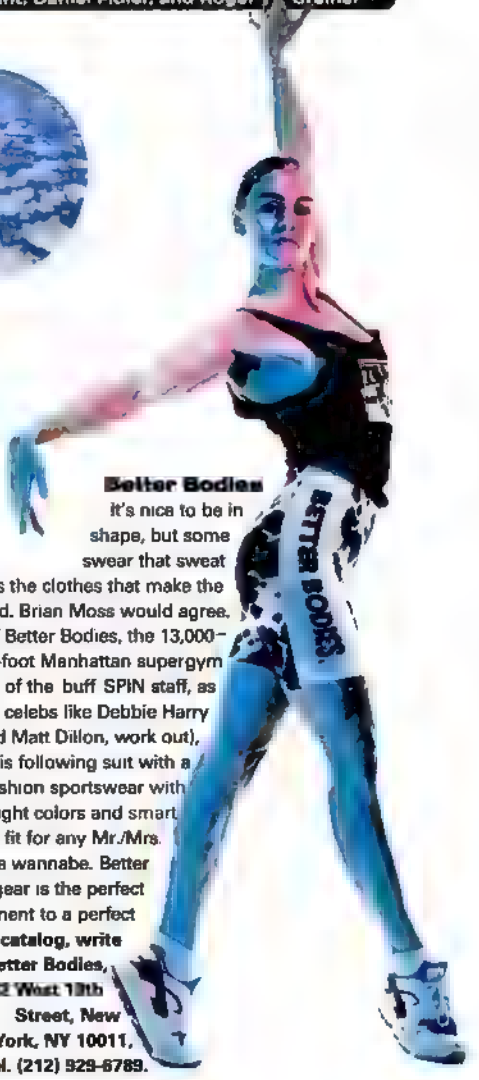


Fly through the sky, have sex with beautiful strangers, live out any fantasy your heart desires. No, this ain't some super Club Med. It's just the inside of your head—your dreams. San Francisco's Lucidity Institute claims total conscious control of one's dreams through the use of its new dreaming machine, a six-week instructional course, and about 1,200 bucks. Successful results depend on the individual, and if your dreams aren't what you'd hoped, you've got a 60-day money-back guarantee to sleep on.

Sweet 'N Low Coffee Liqueur

Yeah, we know the story, you'd have another drink, but you're just getting too damn heavy. Well don't fret, because the Glendale, California – based Spirits International is now marketing a Sweet 'N Low–laced substitute for Kahlua, with only half the normal calories. More light alcohols are scheduled to follow shortly. C'mon, fatboy, bottoms up!

Better Bodies



It's nice to be in shape, but some swear that sweat aside, it's the clothes that make the Arnold. Brian Moss would agree. Founder of Better Bodies, the 13,000-square-foot Manhattan supergym (where most of the buff SPIN staff, as well as celebs like Debbie Harry and Matt Dillon, work out), Moss is following suit with a line of fashion sportswear with bright colors and smart patterns fit for any Mr./Mrs. Universe wannabe. Better Bodies gear is the perfect complement to a perfect body. **For a catalog, write to Better Bodies, 22 West 19th Street, New York, NY 10011, tel. (212) 929-6789.**

TOP LEFT: DARIA AMATO; BOTTOM LEFT: SELF PORTRAIT BY RODERICK ANGLE. MAKEUP BY MICHAEL ANGELO. MODEL PHOTOGRAPHED BY MARTY MYERS

Z. Cavaricci

PROFILES PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE

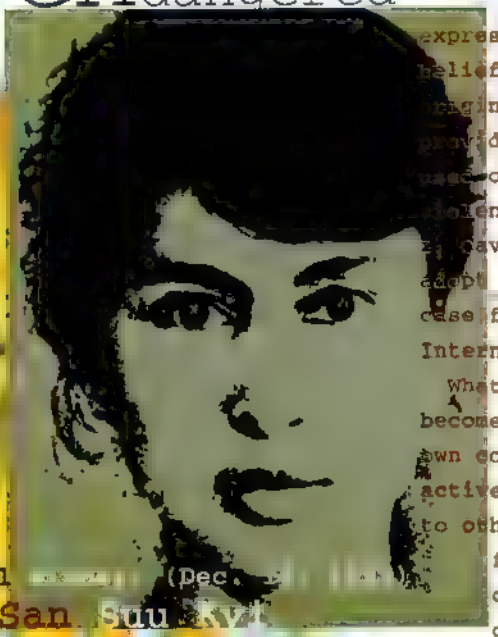
individuals

lives are endangered

Calling attention to their plight is one of the most effective devices there is to help people who are detained for the peaceful expression of their beliefs, race, sex, ethnic origin or religion, provided they have not used or advocated violence. Each month Z. Cavaricci will adopt another prisoner case from Amnesty International's files.

Whatever you do, don't become a prisoner of your own conscience: Get active, spread the word to others, have your friends adopt their own prisoners, and contact the people below and help get these prisoners released.

Set One Free.



In 1990, more than 80 percent of Myanmar's voters elected to be governed by the National League for Democracy and the party's general secretary, Aung San Suu Kyi. Yet despite this overwhelming majority vote, the military government still holds power - and Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest. On December 10, 1991 Aung San Suu Kyi will be awarded a Nobel Peace Prize. Her husband and children will be accepting the Award on Aung San Suu Kyi's behalf. Please write demanding the immediate and unconditional release of Aung San Suu Kyi, so that she can govern her nation peacefully: General Saw Maung, Chairman, State Law and Order Restoration council (SLORC), c/o Ministry of Defense, Signal Pagoda Road, Yangon, Union of Myanmar (Burma).

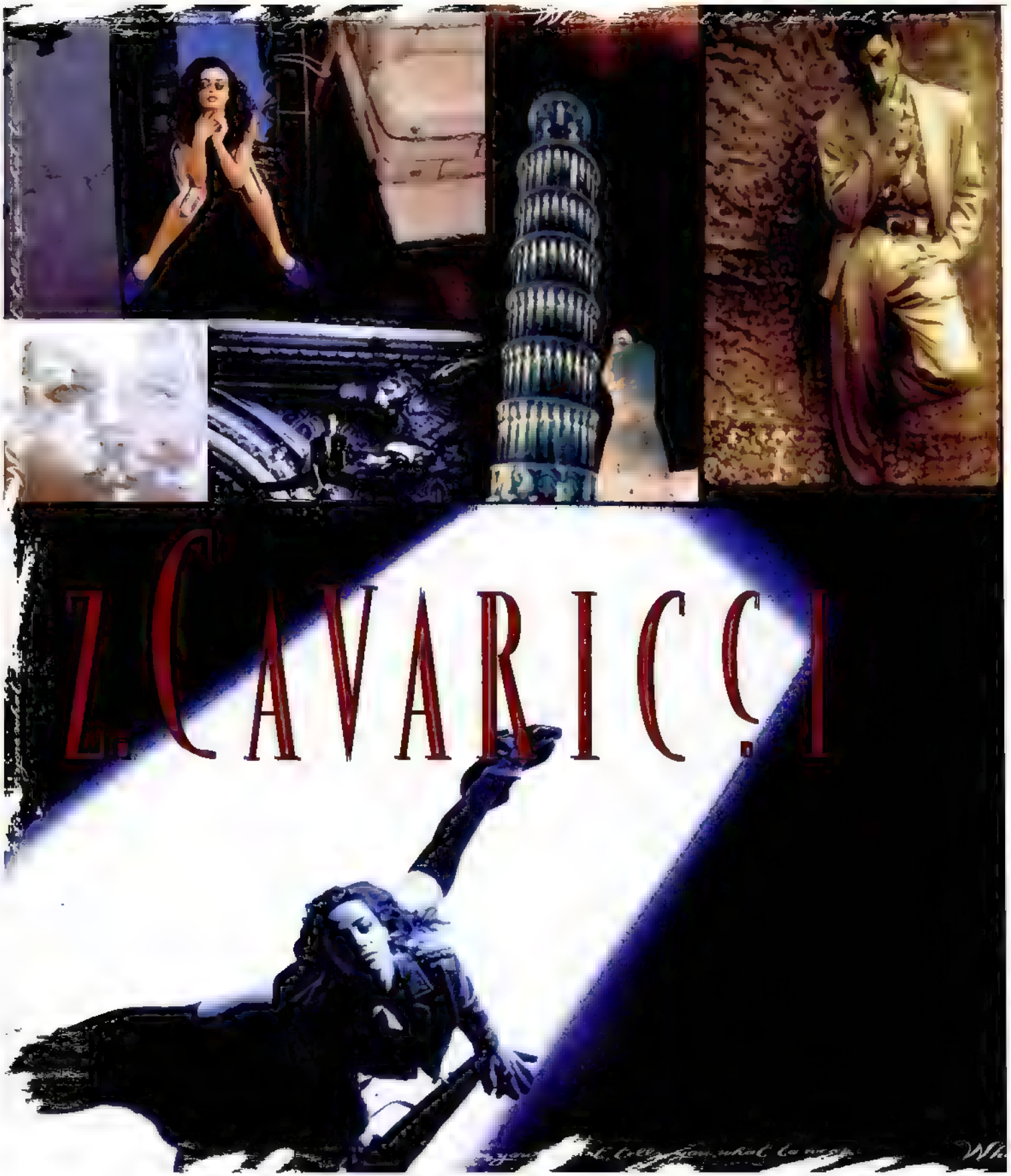
Nobel (Dec.

Aung San Suu Kyi

free prisoners of conscience

ensure fair trials

Call 1-800-55-AMNESTY or write to Amnesty International: 322 Eighth Avenue • New York, New York 10001-4808.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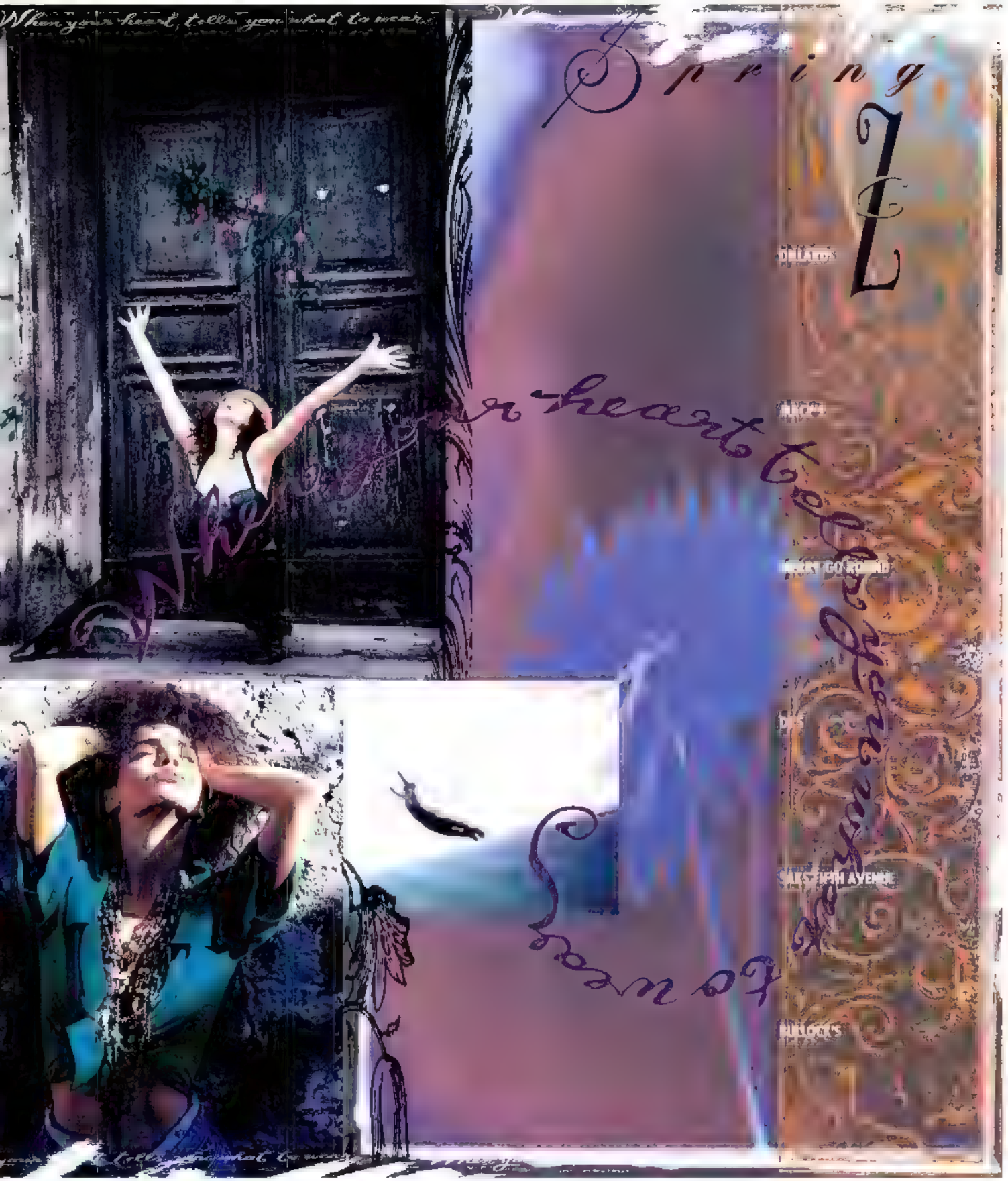
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Spring
DILLARD'S
Let your heart tell you what to wear
SAKS FIFTH AVENUE
DILLARD'S

fanfare for the common man

Who is John Mellencamp?
BOB GUCCIONE, JR., goes to the source.

John Mellencamp stopped wanting to be a rock star about the time he became one. That's the whole key to understanding his mumbled rage of protest against his own life.

He wanted to be a star when he was younger and worked hard and made a lot of mistakes on the way to trying to become one. Because rock musicians are society's licensed outlaws, they seem, for the duration of their careers, to be somehow exempted from the real world and its consequences which age the rest of us, and so they have the illusion of staying perpetually adolescent, like Peter Pan. But Mellencamp's disavowal of the self-nourishing glamour culture—rock's fountain of youth—meant that he *did* age. Without the sleek aerodynamics of the rock life-style propelling him through life at such a speed that nothing passed through sticks, he accumulated life's mundane experiences along with the extraordinary, collecting like leaves on the windshield of a parked car. So when he finally became successful, with *American Fool*, in 1982, he was caught, flailing frustratedly, in the crosscurrents of the matured person trying to live and reconcile himself with the immature and even sometimes ridiculous delusions of what stardom is supposed to mean. If he looked awkward and uncomfortable, it was because he was.

The irony is, it's precisely that tension which propelled his career to superstardom. His public persona of the angry rebel repudiating the system was really the picture of a man in the struggle of trying to extricate himself from the systematized rebellion rock'n'roll had become. It was as if the stage curtain had lifted unexpectedly and caught him, disgusted with his costume and the play, trying to get out of both, and the audience mistook his tantrum for his performance and applauded wildly.

Photographs by Anton Corbijn

American Fool made him a pop star, but *Scarecrow*, a collection of serious songs about the life and problems of rural and small-town America, was the sort of move that for most pop stars amounts to sculpting their own tombstones then lying down and placing them neatly over their heads. *Scarecrow* could well have been Mellencamp's articulate resig-

nation speech from the music business, but instead it elevated him to being a prophet for the masses, without diminishing, in fact increasing, his hard rocker reputation. Now, as he railed against the raping of the American farmer, corporate sponsorship of rock'n'roll, and the music industry in general, he was not only rock's new champion rebel; he was also, in the tradition of Dylan and Springsteen, its new poet laureate. No one was more surprised or unprepared for that than John Mellencamp.

"There's so much going on with me right now, someone could do a really good story, *if* they tell it all," he says, in my direction but, wistfully, really more to himself. Even he doesn't believe that amounts to much more than a glorified press announcement of coming attractions. He does have a lot going on: His latest album, *Whenever We Wanted*, has gone platinum, and his tour to support it starts in mid-January; his first movie, *Falling From Grace*, which he directed and stars in, comes out in mid-February; and so does its soundtrack—and he continues to get more immersed in painting. He has also started to hear the criticism, like unseen, ominous approaching footsteps, that at 40 he is too old to rock, which really riles him. But these are just elements of the perfunctory narrative—as coming attractions they are attractive—but not the core of what makes him interesting, compelling as an artist, which is that he's constantly painting over himself like a canvas that he won't allow to dry, partly out of impatience, partly out of perfectionism, partly out of fear.

Mellencamp's chroniclers—the people he keeps hoping will tell the Really Good Story and get all the good bits in—are invariably blinded by the glare of his superficial contradictions: the small-town, good-ol'-boy rock superstar; the sensitive artist/blue-collar, drawling Midwestern hick; the playboy/family man. The casual observer, being little more than census-taker, latches on to one of these colorful juxtapositions and, delighted with the convenience, exhibits the finished portrait convinced of its completeness and insight. Enough of these pictures have created a patchwork mythology: the complex, brooding artist as Common Man. In actual fact he is the exact opposite, a simple-born man, humbled, buffeted and educated by life and no longer simple, who has grown into an artist.

Rock'n'roll starts between the legs and goes through the heart, then to the head. As long as it does those three things, it's a great rock song.

WE'VE ALL GONE TO LOOK FOR AMERICA

"I don't know why you want to go drivin' around tomorrow, but if that's what you want to do, that's what we'll do," John says dispiritedly, hoping I'll say, "Okay, let's just stay here and sit around and bullshit the way we do every couple of years when you put out a record." But I don't.

We're sitting in the kitchen of his home in Hilton Head, SC, with his ex-wife Vicky and his girlfriend, Kim. My idea is to drive around the South for a couple of days with him, talking about the America that he's in the pursuit of trying to describe on his records and, in capsule form, in his movie.

He has just made a 12-inch of five dance remixes of "Love and Happiness," his second single from *Whenever We Wanted*, four done by Junior Vasquez, the New York DJ, and a fifth, "London Mix," done by English DJ Ralph Gezzard, which is really incredible and the version most likely to get play in clubs. Several people had suggested that the song, with its electrifying guitar hook and swooping vocals, would make a great remix but he was uncomfortable with the idea of the transformation. Then Madonna called him up and said, "Is there anything wrong with people dancing to John Mellencamp?" So he did it.

John hates doing interviews and sees my proposed odyssey as having to do something he hates for two days, and had already cut it to one day by the time I arrived; by the time we leave the next morning he's whittled it down to an hour drive to Savannah, Georgia, and back. *On the Road* it ain't.

Kim was a successful model before she gave it up to move to Bloomington, Indiana, to live with John. She met him on a blind date, hated how rude she thought he was and so, of course, was intrigued by him. That's rock'n'roll.

She and Vicky get on well, and Kim gets on well with Vicky and John's kids. Like a puppeteer with a puppet of himself on each hand and doing both voices, one the comfortable husband, the other the excited boyfriend, he sounds ever so slightly different as he talks to each woman. Sitting there, I realize that he *is* both men. He is clearly with Kim, told me he is monogamous with her, and she travels with him everywhere, but he is obviously still close to Vicky, as if they may have divorced but they haven't separated. "She was the great love of my life," he tells me later in the flat tone of voice a person has when they say something they believe to be absolutely and irrevocably true.

On the way to Savannah, John plays tour guide, hoping this will compensate for the reduction of my planned excellent adventure. He comments on plantations we pass, invisible in the thickness of the woods, and he tells me interesting tidbits of southern history, which he has absorbed on his sojourns through the South when making some of his most striking videos, like "Paper in Fire." For miles at one point on either side of the road there is the disconcerting juxtaposition of colorless trailers and shacks, some with old cars and pickup trucks on the unkempt grass, literally next door to beautiful homes on manicured lawns. There are more churches than signposts. One is a long, flat trailer with a hand-painted wooden sign. "I drove this way on a Friday night a couple of weeks ago and there were *five* church services going on," Mellencamp says.

As we cross the bridge that leads into Savannah, John asks me if I smell the paper mill in the distance vomiting its slow-billowing smoke into the sky. I tell him I don't. He says I must be able to. I stick my head out the window and try to inhale the ambient pollution, but I still can't smell it. He looks at me, incredulous. "You can't smell *that*?" I can't. To me the air smells fresh. I wonder what New York must smell like to him when he visits.

In Savannah we search for the old slave quarters, eat a hamburger, and then he shows me the infamous slave steps, deep stone ledges where slaves were displayed and sold. "There, you seen enough?" he asks gleefully, already steering me back toward the car. "Let's go home and get this interview over with."

On the way back, while we're stopped at a stoplight, we see a guy in a T-shirt, with a cigarette in his mouth and a six-pack of Busch in his hand, walk past us in the direction we've just come from. "Look at that guy," says John. "He's got nothing to do but find somewhere to sit and smoke his cigarette and drink that six-pack. I could live like that."

"No you couldn't. You think you could, but you couldn't."

"Yes I could," he says, in his rising sing-songy voice. "Yes I could. At least I'd like to try for a while."

LOVE AND HAPPINESS

The first time I interviewed Mellencamp I fell asleep. So did he. It was five years ago, on a hot summer day, and we were sitting on deck chairs by his pool in Bloomington. A tape of his new, much anticipated record, *The Lonesome Jubilee*, was playing on a boom box. He was riding the seemingly unending crest of the *Scarecrow* wave. He was still married and his third daughter, Justice, was just over a year old. He was in his mid-30s and on top of the world. We were both exhausted from recent hectic schedules and somewhere in the middle of our conversation nodded off. When he woke up he said, embarrassed, "Man, I must be about the most exciting interview you've ever had." "I must be the most exciting *interviewer* you've ever had," I replied.

"I was living in Camelot then," he says now, sitting in his small painting studio crowded with neatly stacked completed canvases. "I had this nice little home life and was able to walk between being in a rock band and the next day come home and have kids, a white picket fence. I had the best of both worlds. Now I don't have the best of either."

His paintings have evolved dramatically since he started out three years ago. Some of them are discretely screened into the background of the CD booklet for *Whenever We Wanted*, perfectly reflecting both his pride in them and his shyness about showing them. Impressionistic and all done from the head—he doesn't work with models—they are stark and haunting and what people who know about these things would call naive. The faces all have the same large, sad, thoughtful eyes but different personalities. Not vibrant and not necessarily as sad as they look at first, quick

glance, they are portraits of imaginary people who have lived real lives.

He paints for several hours—sometimes eight or nine—every day when he is home, and says it makes writing songs easier: "I'll be in the middle of a painting and all of a sudden have this idea like, Oh yeah, love and happiness, there's no value left in love and happiness. It's a worthless commodity today. So I put down the paintbrush and there's the guitar"—he points to a black acoustic guitar on its stand—"and I write the song. That's the way the whole record was written."

SPIN: Are you too old for rock'n' roll, as Jim Greer suggested in his SPIN review of *Whenever We Wanted*?

Mellencamp: Fuck no! That pisses me off. Tell this kid to send me his best rock song. Let's see what rock'n'roll is to this guy.

SPIN: He actually was in a band. Rude Buddha.

Mellencamp: I want to critique his stuff. And if it's good, I'll say it's good. But if he can't keep the beat and can't put rhyme and lyric and cadence and everything together . . . 'cause rock'n'roll—see, the thing that this kid doesn't understand is *he is not bigger than the music.* No one is. R.E.M. aren't. Guns N' Roses aren't. I'm not, he isn't. People forget that—they think they're bigger than the music, and that's just not true.

Rock 'n' roll starts between the legs and goes through the heart, then to the head. As long as it does those three things, it's a great rock song.

SPIN: You said to me once that you thought rock'n'roll was really only rock'n'roll in the beginning, in the '50s.

Mellencamp: Yeah, because all that was an accident. A happy accident. Nobody thought this "nigger bop" music would last, right? But the kids of that generation made it keep going, and now they are our parents and we kept it going. The selling out of rock'n'roll really began in the mid-'70s.

SPIN: How do you mean?

Mellencamp: Well, first of all, anybody that's going to sell their song—and I don't care who they are, and I like some of the people who do—to a corporate sponsor, it's not rock'n'roll any more. It's a commercial.

But I can tell you, man, there's no crown in heaven for not selling out.

SPIN: You've also said that too much reliance on image is antithetical to rock.

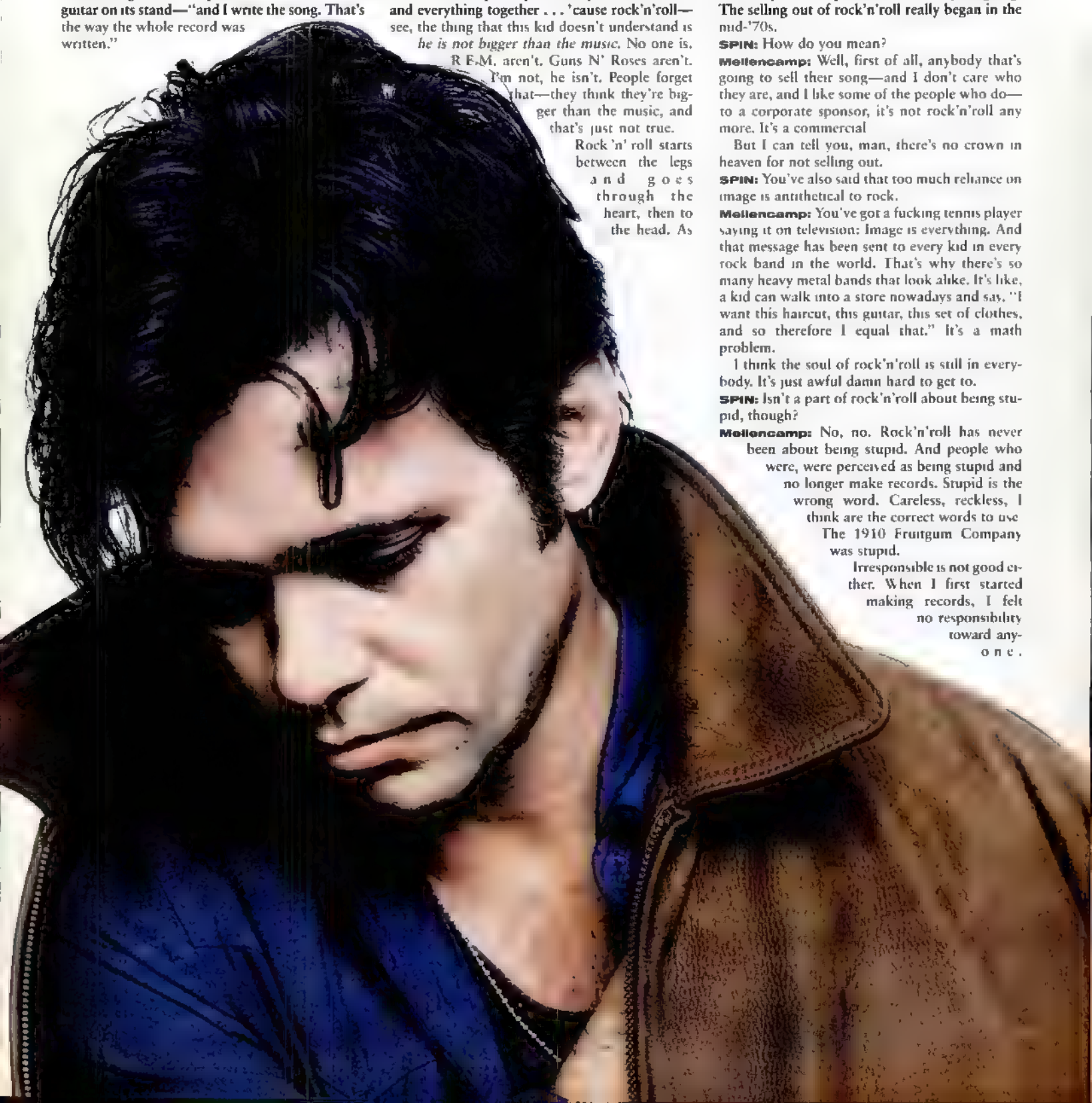
Mellencamp: You've got a fucking tennis player saying it on television: Image is everything. And that message has been sent to every kid in every rock band in the world. That's why there's so many heavy metal bands that look alike. It's like, a kid can walk into a store nowadays and say, "I want this haircut, this guitar, this set of clothes, and so therefore I equal that." It's a math problem.

I think the soul of rock'n'roll is still in everybody. It's just awful damn hard to get to.

SPIN: Isn't a part of rock'n'roll about being stupid, though?

Mellencamp: No, no. Rock'n'roll has never been about being stupid. And people who were, were perceived as being stupid and no longer make records. Stupid is the wrong word. Careless, reckless, I think are the correct words to use. The 1910 Fruitgum Company was stupid.

Irresponsible is not good either. When I first started making records, I felt no responsibility toward anyone.



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It's a stupid place to be. Irresponsibility and stupidity are never assets.

SPIN: When you wrote "Scarecrow," did you think the farm situation could or would improve?

Mellencamp: Oh no, I knew it'd get worse. My outlook on life has never changed. I expect the worse and hope for the best.

I mean, it's disappointing but I'm not astonished. Any time the government takes control of something like they have the farm problem, you can about bet it's not gonna go in the way of the common person.

SPIN: Has corporate America gotten worse in your mind?

Mellencamp: You know that it has. Tons worse. It's gonna be worse when it becomes even more global because there'll be just a handful of corporations running everything. Then we won't get anywhere. It won't make a damn difference what we want. It's what they want.

Very few towns have identities anymore. The same corporate architecture's going up in every city.

SPIN: How come you don't feel like you have to be hip?

Mellencamp: Because I feel that I'm correct. I feel that I'm honest. Honesty is always better than cool. If I write how I feel, how can that be incorrect? "Jackie Brown" [from *Big Daddy*] is a perfect example. "We shame ourselves to watch people like this live." That's how I felt. And I've been able to articulate, in fewer words, the way I feel, than when I was younger.

SPIN: What made you want to do a movie? You've turned down lots of opportunities to act.

Mellencamp: Well, I thought this was a good story.

SPIN: Is it autobiographical?

Mellencamp: No, absolutely not. I mean, let's face it, this movie was written in 1982 [by Larry McMurtry] and there are similarities. But was Marlon Brando playing Stanley Kowalski because he was really Kowalski in *A Streetcar Named Desire*? Any time a person's in a movie there are similarities.

This is not *Terminator 2*. The character I play—you don't really know if you like him or not. The movie is really about two women. I don't even know if you really like them. Some scenes you do and some you don't. It's a hard movie for an America that wants to get their dicks sucked without having to do anything other than just sit there.

SPIN: That ought to be on the poster. I notice there's no eye contact in your paintings. Why?

Mellencamp: I never even thought about it, but I think there's a certain amount of isolation. You know, it's important for me to have my people be isolated. Because we all live with such isolation. You don't know who you are and everyone knows it. And that's one thing I can do on canvas, is make sure there's nothing phony about it.

SPIN: What is the source of your anger?

Mellencamp: People always think that I'm angry. I'm not angry. Why did I get in fights when I was a kid? 'Cause I liked it. It's just that simple. I fought my best friend when we were kids. We'd beat the shit out of each other and the next morning act like the fight didn't happen. It's something to do. There's not much to do in a small town.

I don't think we're put on this earth to live happy lives. I think we're put here to challenge ourselves physically, emotionally, intellectually.

I *am* disgusted a lot of times with a lot of things. But don't confuse disgust with anger. Disgust will make you speak out about things.

SPIN: It's easy to be disgusted and hard to be happy. The majority of life is struggle and discontent and fear.

Mellencamp: Life is not about having a good time. We're told you do certain things. You behave a certain way and happiness will come your way. Which isn't true. I don't think we're put on this earth to live happy lives. I think we're put here to challenge ourselves physically, emotionally, intellectually.

SPIN: To what purpose?

Mellencamp: For the purpose to better our fellow man.

SPIN: Why do you think you intimidate people?

Mellencamp: People don't like people who are not afraid. Because then it makes them question themselves about being afraid. I don't think anybody should be afraid of anything. What are you afraid of? Are they gonna take your birthday away? Slap you on the hand? Good. Slap me on the fucking hand. It will make me want to do it all the more. I think that's the way life is supposed to be. Lay your dick on the line and get it cut off and then really come back and show them.

SPIN: Do you still believe in rock'n'roll?

Mellencamp: Absolutely. Sometimes I love it more now than I ever have. I kind of look at it again from a different point on the hill, a different vantage point. The merit of it is more than being wild and reckless. The merit of it is more than being sensitive and politically correct. There's a lot more to it than that. And all I can really say is there's nobody, nobody that's bigger than the music. It will go on forever. And if it's good, it will do more than we ever thought it could.

I WAS BORN IN A SMALL TOWN.... PROB'LY DIE IN A SMALL TOWN.... AND THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME.

In *Falling From Grace* John Mellencamp plays Bud Parks, a wealthy country music star who returns from California with his wife and daughter to tiny, rural Doak City in Indiana for an annual family gathering. Part Eugene O'Neill's *Desire Under the Elms*, part Tennessee Williams's *Orpheus Descending*, and part *Peyton Place*, the movie is a charcoal sketch of simple people who in their ceaseless monotony have twisted the wires of their lives into a hopeless, meaningless tangle. Despite the fact that Bud has what appears to be the perfect life—or maybe because of it—he drifts toward the self-destructive flame that already consumes his family and the people involved with them. He restarts a 16-year-dormant love affair with his high school girlfriend, who is married to his brother and having an affair with their father. Eventually Bud's wife, distraught by his moodiness and suspecting the affair, leaves him, and Bud spirals deeper into Doak City's black, spiritless void.

On the superficial level of its obvious title, this is the story of a guy who has everything and blows it, winding up at the bottom he's been seeking and consummating his pathetic disintegration with a ritual from his forgiven youth: riding in a steel cage dragged by a pickup truck, which is about as much fun and as stupid as it sounds. It's his weak punctuation mark for his surrender. But on a deeper, more subtle level, the movie is Bud's horrific journey into himself, and the amoral and lost characters he interacts with are the feared elements of his own soul.

Mesmerized by the exquisite pain of his descent, Bud discovers that the townspeople, who at first revered him for his unpretentiousness and accessibility, now resent him. For them his appeal was the opposite of what he imagined: It was that he *wasn't* one of them. Because he had escaped Doak City he was inspiring and cathartic only as myth, in the same way the painting of the saint on a church wall is preferable to the actual person walking around.

At one point, just before she leaves, Bud's wife explodes at him: "I've had it up to here with your hick town fantasies!" Not necessarily a pivotal scene in the film, it is the keyhole through which we can see into the parallel movie playing simultaneously: the story of John Mellencamp, played by Bud Parks. For although *Falling From Grace* really isn't autobiographical, beyond a few duplicate résumé items, Bud's odyssey is also Mellencamp's tormented self-examination. Bud's hick town fantasies, that he can step from the heavens of pop stardom and fit in with the common folk, are Mellencamp's self-doubts, too. By freaky coincidence, Mellencamp is Bud's secret sharer—both men fear they can't go home again, that they don't belong there or anywhere, and that stardom has doomed them to eternal isolation and loneliness.

"I'm still a fucking kid from a town of 12,000 people, who wanted to be on the football team and made bad grades in high school. And was considered unsavory to hang around with by the rich people in Indiana. I'm still that kid, still that person. That's never going to change. No matter how many good songs I write, no matter how many good paintings I paint, no matter how many records I sell," he tells me, back in Hilton Head, safe in his studio, surrounded by his paintings. It's the sort of remark that gives his image the shine of patent leather shoes, at first hearing. The small town guy with his small town attitude, shrugging his shoulders and resigning himself to his origins. And maybe partly that's what he's doing, maybe that's what he needs to do to live with his frustrations. But it's also his recognition of the fact that no amount of artistic accomplishment alleviates the pain of the artistic struggle. Art is the hopeless pursuit of the human horizon. What makes John Mellencamp so interesting is that he keeps pursuing it.

This is a rodent. It runs but never gets anywhere. It will never know the joy of darting through woods and meadows while fast-moving clouds race across a blue sky. It will live its entire life in a box. It doesn't have a choice.

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WELCO

Voivod has been hailed the future of progressive cyber-rock. ERIK DAVIS looks inside its creator's mind to make sure the gray matter hasn't gone soft.

What's happened to the Voivod? It's a question any follower of the French-Canadian progressive metal band would have to ask after hearing the new *Angel Rat* LP. Up until now, Voivod seemed to live on another planet—after all, the band formed in the frozen isolation of an aluminum factory-town north of Quebec, learned English from the Beatles and riffs from Gentle Giant and Rush, and drew its ideas from hallucinations its drummer had when he was a kid. On albums such as *Killing Technology* and *Dimension: Hatröss*, the band dove into the man-machine interface with the neuron-grilling fury of a psychedelic terminator. But now its stuttering schizo-thrash has been trimmed to a much simpler rock groove, and singer Denis Belanger sounds like a human being instead of malfunctioning translation software. Something has happened as well to the band's mascot and chief lyrical subject—the Voivod, the violent cyborg vampire born and bred on the planet Morgoth. Last seen creating new artificial selves from inside the hypercube on 1989's *Nothingface*, the creature is nowhere to be found on *Angel Rat*.

"The Voivod has gone back into his head to be happy," says drummer, cover artist, and concept man Michel Langevin in his heavily accented English. "With *Nothingface*, we closed the final chapter. The Voivod context was a cold one, a robotic way of seeing things. We wanted something from a little more human point of view." So the band took a look around, and realized that all those fractal illustrations on British import records looked like clouds, that the computer viruses that kept attacking Langevin's computer were alive, and that Frankenstein is an old world folk tale as much as it is science fiction. So *Angel Rat* takes a turn for the human, or at least the organic.

The shift occurs in "Golem," a song about a slave robot realizing he has human feelings. "Why do I dream of kites?" Belanger sings through silicon gauze, echoing Philip K. Dick's sci-fi title *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, showing how the line between human and inhuman is not a matter of biology but instead that peculiar black box of the imagination. Voivod knows that sentient things are nothing new—a golem is a legendary clay creature found in Eastern European Jewish mysticism. So while *Angel Rat* chucks the robots, its lyrics still come back to creepy inanimate objects that sometimes seem more alive than we do.

Along with the turn toward the living, *Angel Rat* also makes a questionable move toward more basic rock. With some songs exposing the kind of riffs that are only a TV remote control away. The tune "Angel Rat" is a solid piece of work, but it sounds like Queensrÿche, whereas the Voivod of old sounded like nothing on this planet. In too much of *Angel Rat*, Voivod forgets that its forte is the heady, not the heavy.

Though Voivod's pop move in part forced bassist-keyboardist Blackie to leave the band to pursue more experimental music, Langevin defends its new caveman stance, saying, "The last tour we realized that we were concentrating so much on doing those complex chords and complex beats that we didn't have time to enjoy the music. And also the crowd was getting confused—there were so many changes they didn't have time to realize what was going on." Even Langevin and Belanger weren't sure about the riffs guitarist Denis D'Amour was coming up with after *Nothingface*. D'Amour thought they weren't hearing the music with the right frame of mind, so they broke out the hash and fired up the soldering gun. "And it was like, oh yeah," Langevin says, insisting that anyone who doesn't think *Angel Rat* is the band's trippiest disc should hear it within the proper technological setting: CD through headphones into an artificially altered cerebral cortex.

The more you listen to *Angel Rat*, the more stuff emerges, not least of which is the excellence of Langevin's drumming, a cool combination of solid hammering and oddly timed, finely webbed patterns on the high hat and ride cymbals that have little to do with typical rock drumming. But while *Angel Rat* has its share of tangled breaks, angular guitar fills, and "cozmic FX," there's not nearly enough of the one-two punch of noise and complexity that made Voivod the rock equivalent of a dosed computer.

It's no accident that the two best songs on the album, "Nuage Fractal" and "Freedoom," came about after Langevin got into chaos theory, which is all about noise and complexity. "Chaos touches everything from weather to computers to art. It's like a new anarchic science. And this new science, which we could only analyze with computers, is already everywhere around us, in snowflakes and clouds. The trees probably knew about fractal designs before we did," he says with a smile.

Not that all of *Angel Rat* is fungus-gobbling. "None of the Above" cuts against the Gulf War media blitz ("It was almost like a hockey game on TV, violence mixed with publicity," says Langevin), while "Best Regards" is about an anxious guy with apocalypse on the brain writing to his president and getting no response. The bulk of the album feels like fractured folk tales. Not only has Langevin been reading folk material voraciously, but he's writing a book of "twisted kid's stories" with his friend Kiisti Matsuo.

The title song is actually spun from one of these personal folk tales. Langevin, explaining the narrative of the song, says, "There's a little boy lost in the forest, and the angel rat comes down from the sky when it's raining to show the little boy the way out of the forest. The little boy doesn't know whether it's good, an angel or a rat, but he follows him anyway. At the end, the angel rat flies away from the cliff and the little boy is by the cliff. And he has to jump, and he doesn't know if he's gonna fall or fly. The angel rat goes back to find another boy, and you can hear the kid jumping with the sound of the guitar. But you don't know if the little boy fell down. Or maybe even if he falls down and dies, he's gonna fly."

A lot of aging rockers draw juice from their adolescence, but Michel Langevin is one dude whose imagination is plugged deep into the glowing haze of the preteen. "When I was five years old, I got run over by a car and got my head cracked everywhere," he says. "For a long period of time I had difficulties distinguishing reality and fiction, but I kind of cured it with drawings and stories. It's where I started to draw and extrapolate my imagination. Things were moving in my head. I was talking to things and they were answering back." Little creatures kept reappearing in his drawings and his mind—bogeymen, talking telephone polls, a hanged man, and

THE MA

OME TO

eventually the Voivod.

It's pretty obvious why the glowing murk of revery and books that haunted Langevin's mind would draw him to the glowing murk of '70s progressive rock. "When I was young I was buying Genesis albums and it almost sounded like old folk tales. I was reading the lyrics and it was all stories and all the characters were on the front cover, and it all gave me a vision, like you could see the character moving," he explains. Inspired by these records, Langevin remains one of the few major-label rockers to control his band's artwork, and the images he's scanned into his Amiga and altered for *Angel Rat*'s cover is almost a catalog of Voivod influences: The sky is from a Doré illustration of Dante, the rock from a fractal randomizer, the pirate from the silent film *Napoleon*, the ocean from *Omni* magazine, and the golem from *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. "We're trying to give a strong image for the eyes of the listener, a mood," says Langevin.

Besides playing in Voivod, Langevin collects old tin toys and often comes back from tour with two or three boxes of stuff. He refuses to let go of the part of him that's still a child. "The imagination of a kid is a way of seeing where things are marvelous or frightening. When you lose that, you lose everything. You lose interest in life. You become so down to earth that you think about your future, business, and life becomes a calculated thing like it's been written in a book and you have to follow the instructions. If you don't travel with your imagination, life will go and be boring." Let's hope Voivod takes its music to the same distant realms its members' minds visit, so the band won't go and be boring.

PHOTO OF BAND BY LARRY BUSSACCA. ILLUSTRATION BY DUANE HOOVER

ACHINE

Equally inspired by punk and house,

THE BRIT PACK

a new generation of bands is threatening to stage a third British invasion of the U.S. charts. JAMES BROWN runs through a roll call of the troops.

THE *SMASH HITS* MAGAZINE POLL-winners party may not rival Lollapalooza as event of the year, but in the stop-motion world of British pop, this prepubescent Grammy-style bash wields massive influence. (It, for example, can be held directly responsible for elevating the New Kids and Vanilla Ice to temporary icon status.) This year the group Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine fulfilled every downtrodden British band's dream when it attacked the show's presenter on live television, bringing the high and mighty BBC to a chaotic halt in front of the watching millions. That Carter was in the position to even launch such an attack makes it more poignant.

At home in Britain, Carter, along with Ned's Atomic Dustbin, EMF, the Farm, Primal Scream, Pop Will Eat Itself, the Wonder Stuff, and Jesus Jones are everyday darlings of the music press, but in the United States they've assumed a more important role. They are the Brit Pack. Young, upwardly mobile, and arrogant, but clearly not pop yuppies, the Brit Pack is a startling alternative to the hair farmers who ride in (still) from the badlands on their choppers with bimbos in tow.

The Brit Pack tours together, experiences the same waves of cross-cultural impact, and despite meeting'n'greeting a thousand rock-biz types, has yet to bland out for the American market. These bands are spotty and snotty, and they know what they want. Inspired by the aggression of punk, they had their financial training under the enforced hardship of the Thatcher '80s and had their minds expanded by Britain's post–acid house epiphany.

A two-piece with a drum machine and a bad attitude, **Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine**'s raison d'être is to get up people's noses. Instead of flirting with decadent glamour—like duos such as Soft Cell and Suicide have done—Carter writes songs about squatting and child abuse, compensating for such grim tableaux by melding Buzzcocks-style punk guitars to the urgent uptempo beat of the Pet Shop Boys.

Carter has the audacity to become stars without even attempting to look handsome—these boys look like rats. At a recent gig a film crew asked two fans to describe the band; the first said, "One looks like a chipmunk," and the second added, "One has spaghetti for hair." This from the people who buy their records?

EMF arrived so quickly on the scene that the band automatically aroused as much suspicion among its peers as it did excitement among its fans. The Farm branded EMF "a put-together band of idiot yokels," while Pop Will Eat Itself, who had failed to achieve success with the same strand of hip pop, merely sniffed in disgruntled tones. Once they'd won the respect of their peers by topping the U.S. charts and playing with them live, EMF was recognized as King of the Pack.

Ever since forming the band two years ago, the members of EMF have carried themselves like archetypal teenage tyros. Once they'd made the world stage, they simply transported their antics from pub to television studio and from nightclub to record company function. Playfully destroying a hotel room, toppling fruit machines, and kidnapping gold discs were but a few of the postpubescent pranks that hurled them toward tabloid coverage.

If EMF is the closest thing the Brit Pack has got to heartthrobs, the band plainly owes its music style to others. Manic keyboardist Derry Brownson freely admits he spent a lot of time watching Jesus Jones's keyboardist smash away at his instrument before treating his own organ to similar battering. Unfortunately for the Jones boy, Adidas-clad Brownson looked more authentic.

Mike Edwards of **Jesus Jones** started off on his road to Damascus in a dodgy U.K. band called Camouflage (not the current dance trio) before getting smart management and record deals. To this date, Edwards has the command to silence his bandmates at a moment's notice and to convince journalists not to smoke during interviews. Playing Beatlesque pop while wearing skateboard duds, Edwards and EMF have watered down hip hop, Anglicized it, and—just as the Stones did with R&B—triumphantly sold it back to the Americans. Does this make him an acute businessman, a musical genius, or merely a Brat?

Both EMF and Jesus Jones owe a debt of gratitude to **Pop Will Eat Itself**, scruffy big brothers of the Brit Pack. The Poppies were long-haired AC/DC fans until they saw the Beastie Boys and sold their souls to rap, becoming *Porky's* to Mike D's *Animal House*. However, their hybrid of grimy rock and rap was too aggressive for indie fans but too long-haired for hip hop's streetwise followers. Mooning out of speeding cars, pissing in journalists' gardens, and getting bottled off a Public Enemy tour was character-building stuff, but PWEI became the Pack's first musical mongrels, bastards in the correct meaning of the word.

A decade ago, the members of Pop Will Eat Itself were in a band with half of **The Wonder Stuff**. In Miles Hunt, the Stuffies have archetypal brat fodder: Brought up admiring Paul Weller, John Lennon, and John Lydon, Hunt developed a negative attitude that has endeared him to a generation as much as his band's music—pop songs that punch you in the mouth like the Beatles after reading Hunter S. Thompson. Although mellowing out since signing up with L.A. management and holidaying in Cali, Miles's initial attitude to America was "sod it." Not only didn't he want to tour he didn't even want "Septics" ("Septic Tanks," meaning Yanks) to buy his records.

If the Wonder Stuff gives the Pack some venom, it also spawned **Ned's Atomic Dustbin**. The shock troops of the Brit Brats, Ned's energy is the secret to its success. Musically the band is like the Banana Splits impersonating Joy Division with just enough pseudo-nudity to make a Herb Ritts calendar. While other Brit Packers are designer-label hungry, Ned's couldn't be more fashion-unconscious. In producing over 50 different T-shirts, the band created an image for its fans that distracted from its own distinctive look (crumped hair and ex-army parkas). The band's appeal lies in classic teen-angst release, and though Ned's Atomic Dustbin have never been welcomed by U.K. daytime radio, they've now become chart fixtures.

The above are the hard-core of the Brit Pack abroad but there are others whose sheer ability as quote machines guarantee them inclusion. Primal Scream versus the Farm would make for a great fight, never mind a debate, but despite being creatively poles apart the two do have a lot in common. Both existed long before the Brit Pack had a hope in hell of existing, both have survived lean periods in their careers, both have an assured arrogance that places them firmly in the pack.

The members of **Primal Scream** believe they are the children of Arthur Lee, the Faces, and Ronnie Spector, and there's a growing band of social butterflies who'd agree. Front man Bobby Gillespie would rather lick the grave of Brian Jones than share a pint with Jesus Jones, and he never misses a chance to stick the boot in to his contemporaries for being dull and mediocre. Already this year he's pretended to own a gold Rolls Royce, encouraged actual terrorist revolt, and called for the whipping of the English society set. A problem child for sure, even if he is 28.

The Scream's brat ticket is awarded not just for Bobby Gillespie's explosive tongue but for the sheer arrogance of the band's musical reach. Production credits on its recent *Screamadelica* LP are split between former Rolling Stones desk man Jimmy Miller and young London DJ wizard Andrew Weatherall. The end product is a spaced-out collection of thumping dance beats, post-rave nursery rhymes, and string-bashing rock songs that share an undeniable spirit.

If the Primals' claims to be the voice of rock past, present, and future are sometimes outlandish, **The Farm** is more confident of its claim to be the first Brit band to mix soccer terrace culture with the music. From the simple sociopolitical slant of their lyrics (the Clash, the Jam) to the steady shuffling beat (club culture) they are perhaps the most mainstream-friendly of the pack. Recognizing sneakers as imperative cultural icons long before Run-D.M.C. even took the laces from their high-tops or Schoolly D put his Filas on, the Farm insists (if not directly) on being seen as the pop representatives of "the normal geezer on the street."

Ironically, while the British public gladly suck on the synthetic breast of mainstream American pop music, it has taken the sweet-toothed, foul-mouthed Brit Pack to fly the flag stateside. It's as if George Michael never happened—and to think one looks like a chipmunk and another has pasta for hair. Are these people really the voice of a new transatlantic generation?

Louder than bombs, *clockwise from bottom*: Brit Pack invaders Jesus Jones, EMF, and Carter the Unstoppable Sex Machine.

Soundgarden singer Chris Cornell. *Opposite, from top:* guitarist Kim Thayil, bassist Ben Shepherd, and drummer Matt Cameron.

sub zep?

What happens if the next great neometal hope turns out to be just another bunch of Neophytes With Attitude? Popular infotainer ANN MAGNUSON gently probes the soft underbelly of Seattle's hardest rockers.

Why the hell was I interviewing Soundgarden? I knew as much about the metal scene as George Bush knew about the homeless. Though I doubt the 41st President has ever set foot in a soup kitchen, at least I had spent my formative years chasing Jethro Tull around the eastern seaboard—they deserved that Grammy, goddamn it. Granted, back in high school I missed an entire Uriah Heep concert due to what was either PCP or elephant tranquilizers, but I'll never forget the last Motörhead show, which yielded not only my most cherished tour T-shirt but initiated what will no doubt be a lifelong relationship with my chiropractor.

So why had SPIN called? Because I had to go and open my big mouth and admit to fantasies involving long-haired and shirtless rock gods from Seattle. Hey, I wasn't talking about anyone specific—I thought everybody in Seattle was long-haired and shirtless.

It was obvious that I had a lot to learn about that Seattle Thing, that Sub Pop Thing, that Alternative-Grunge-Thrash-Whatever-You-Call-That-Flannel-Shirt-Thing Thing. I needed answers fast and the first question was, Who is this Soundgarden, and why should I care about this vaguely metal band with the neo-Nugent stud singer?

My quest began in Los Angeles at the Marriott Hotel on the road to the airport. A fitting start for our story as airport roads nationwide are the quintessence of American alienation, debauchery, and transience—a purgatorial pit stop of strip bars and rent-by-the-hour motels. Jimmy Swaggart fell (repeatedly) from grace in Baton Rouge on one of the country's gnarliest airport roads.

Such bleak urban waste was the setting for the Third Annual Concrete Foundation convention, where, for the past three days, hair and hormones ruled. New and old metalheads mingled amid the moussed and spandexed retinue, shamelessly marketing bands they hoped would be the next big thing. Yes, that *was* Kim Fowley I saw as my cohort and I dashed into the

Photographs by Jesse Frohman

first available elevator where we were cheerfully greeted by a pudgy dweeb in an Anthrax T-shirt.

"Hey, are you two lesbians?" he chortled and guffawed under the harsh fluorescence, which clearly exposed his bad skin.

"Yeah . . . *now*," I thought, assuming that my unconscious choice of jeans and a T-shirt constituted Active Dykewear in this parallel universe.

I wondered if it was fair to say this guy was a typical representative of that highly coveted "wider audience" that comes with a major-label distribution deal. Still clinging to the naive hope that something fresh and new wrapped in a flannel shirt and cut-off fatigues would change the world, I fled to the outer parameters of the mosh pit in front of the ballroom stage where Soundgarden had just plugged in.

Tearing into a loud if perfunctory set of songs from its new album *Badmotorfinger*, the band roared like the bankrupt Pan Am widebody jets rumbling overhead. I thought of those lumbering 747s taking off and landing nearby where one small pilot error or cleverly disguised explosive could mean disaster (read: excitement) and perversely hoped the next Alitalia flight would slam into the Marriott. The carnage would have been an appropriately Wagnerian background for Chris Cornell's awesome set of pipes that can blast a note with more force than if Paul Bunyan had accidently dropped his ax on a toe while shrieking "Timber!"

Drummer Matt Cameron and new bassist Ben Shepherd poured a concrete foundation even Jimmy Hoffa would be proud of, as guitarist Kim Thayil pounded *his* ax with furrowed brow. A lyrically revamped version of Black Sabbath's "Into the Void," renamed "Into the Self," sent the moshers into overdrive and, as Cornell caterwauled, one question burned in everyone's mind.

"When's he going to take his shirt off?"

Before you could say, "Sweating, gleaming pectoids," Cornell delivered. Launching into the rock'n'roll Chippendale's schtick that's made him a dorm room pinup, the Captain Morgan Rum hunk look-alike sang about a "Jesus Christ Pose," struck more than a few of his own, then called it a night.

I rediscovered the true meaning of rock'n'roll through Soundgarden's 1989 release, *Louder Than Love*. After a parental dressing-down from a TV producer for a "bad attitude problem," I cranked up *Love*'s "Big Dumb Sex" on the car stereo, a song I found was not only an anthem for a species but the perfect antidote to authority. Singing along with the chorus gave me nearly as much pleasure as giving my dad the finger behind his back when I was 16.

I only wish the interview had been as much fun.

SEATED IN A "YUPSCALE" MEXICAN RESTAURANT, I alternately prodded the band and two green corn tamales, hoping against hope that my opening question would do more than just break the ice.

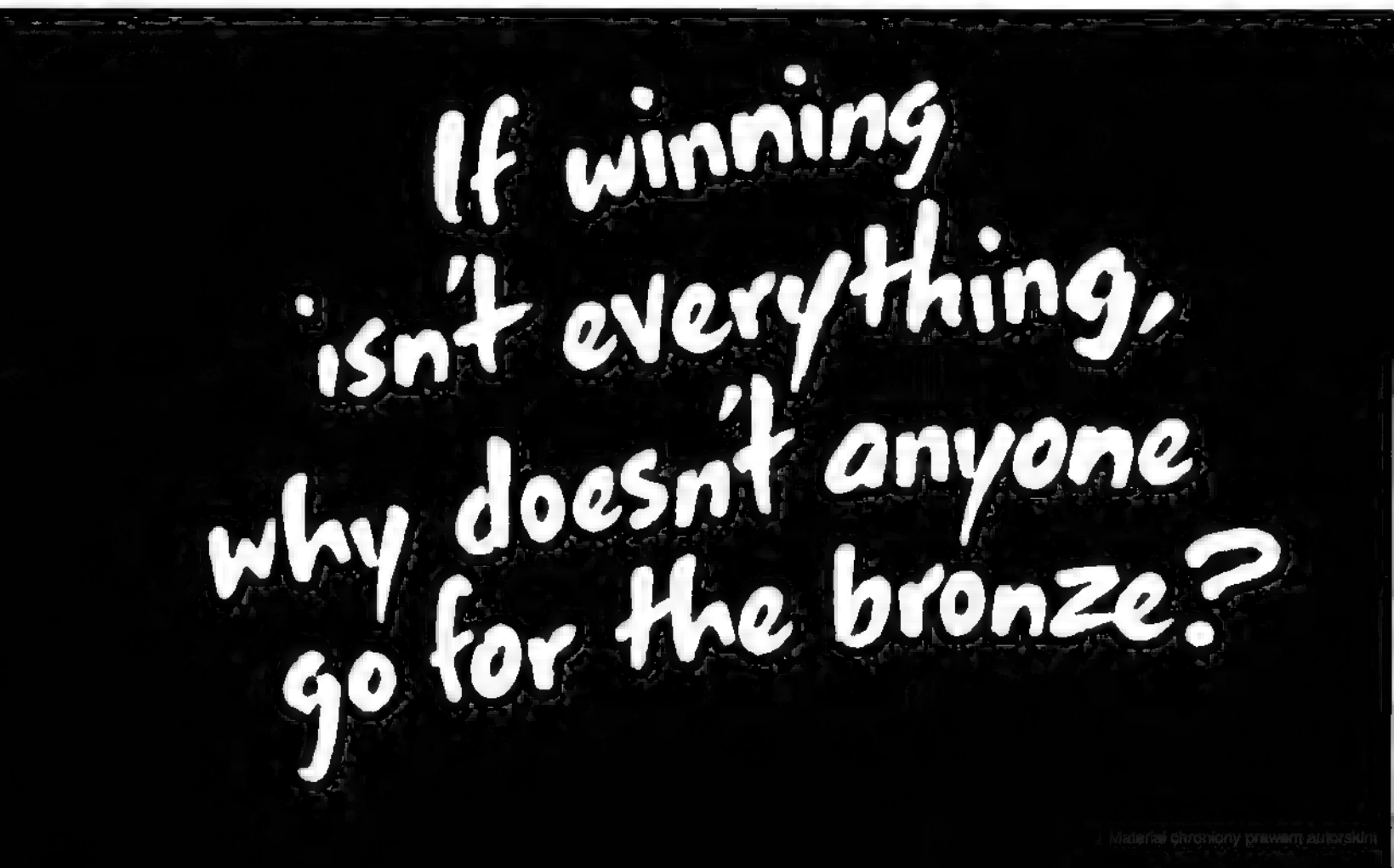
SPIN: if you could legally murder anyone, who would it be?
Kim Thayil: (*Immediately hostile*) You can't legally murder anyone.
SPIN: But if you could.
Thayil: You can't.
SPIN: Tell that to the U.S. Army.
Thayil: I did tell that to the U.S. Army.
SPIN: Did you get drafted?
Thayil: (*On edge*) No, I didn't register. Why would sanctioning it play a part in my decision to murder someone? (*Edgier*) Whether it's legal or not to murder someone, you'd want to murder them anyway. (*Beyond edgy*) I'm not going to go out and murder someone if it's legal.

(Yeesh! Chill out, Descartes, it's just a hypothetical question. Gee, Ted Nugent wouldn't have had any problem with that one. He would've wasted an entire Texas town, plus bagged and gutted Bambi and Thumper in the process.)

SPIN: Is Soundgarden politically correct? Ecologically sound? Are you vegetarians?
Thayil: No, I'm probably in most cases actively anti–political correctness because the ideals are not thought out very well.

(Okay, so these guys aren't political finger-waggers like Fugazi, but they clearly aren't candy-assed hair farmers like Warrant either. Are they heavy alternative or alternative metal? Are they a fresh new hybrid ready to blossom and mercilessly plow my aural field or—dare I say it?—more of the same in threadbare flannel shirts?)

SPIN: The *Los Angeles Times* said that "Sound-



garden is poised to ride a unified hard rock and art rock audience." My question is what's the point, besides higher record sales, of unifying these two audiences?

Chris Cornell: (*With studied disinterest*) We have no intention of unifying anyone really.

SPIN: What is the largest audience you've played for, and do you think that the size of a venue is proportionate to the development of a messianic complex. In other words, which biblical figures do you identify with?

Thayil: Paranoia is necessary to develop a messianic complex. I guess paranoia goes up in a really large venue.

SPIN: You've said that "Jesus Christ Pose" [the first single and video] is not religious. It just has to do with people exploiting a symbol. In what particular ways has that symbol been exploited?

Cornell: You just see it a lot with really beautiful people, or famous people, exploiting that symbol as to imply that they're either a deity or persecuted somehow by their public. So it's pretty much a song that is nonreligious but expressing being irritated by seeing that. It's not that I would ever be offended by what someone would do with that symbol.

SPIN: Don't you think that there is a ritualistic, religious quality rock stars have that makes them surrogate prophets for spiritually malnourished youth?

Cornell: Whether they like it or not, probably, yeah. For the most part, that's where people are going to turn, especially at that age. So a lot of times it's going to mean being the most outrageous or most shocking to that young person's role models up to that point. Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's bad, but I wouldn't worry about a young person believing what Slayer writes about, because eventually those people will find things that make more sense and can help them be more productive.

I needed answers fast and the first question was, Who is this Soundgarden, and why should I care about this vaguely metal band with the neo-Nugent stud singer?

SPIN: At what point did you decide metal was cool?

Thayil: (*Suspicious*) I never thought it was cool. Are you talking about our youth or something? I think we stopped thinking it was cool before the band was formed. Probably something we outgrew.

SPIN: And now?

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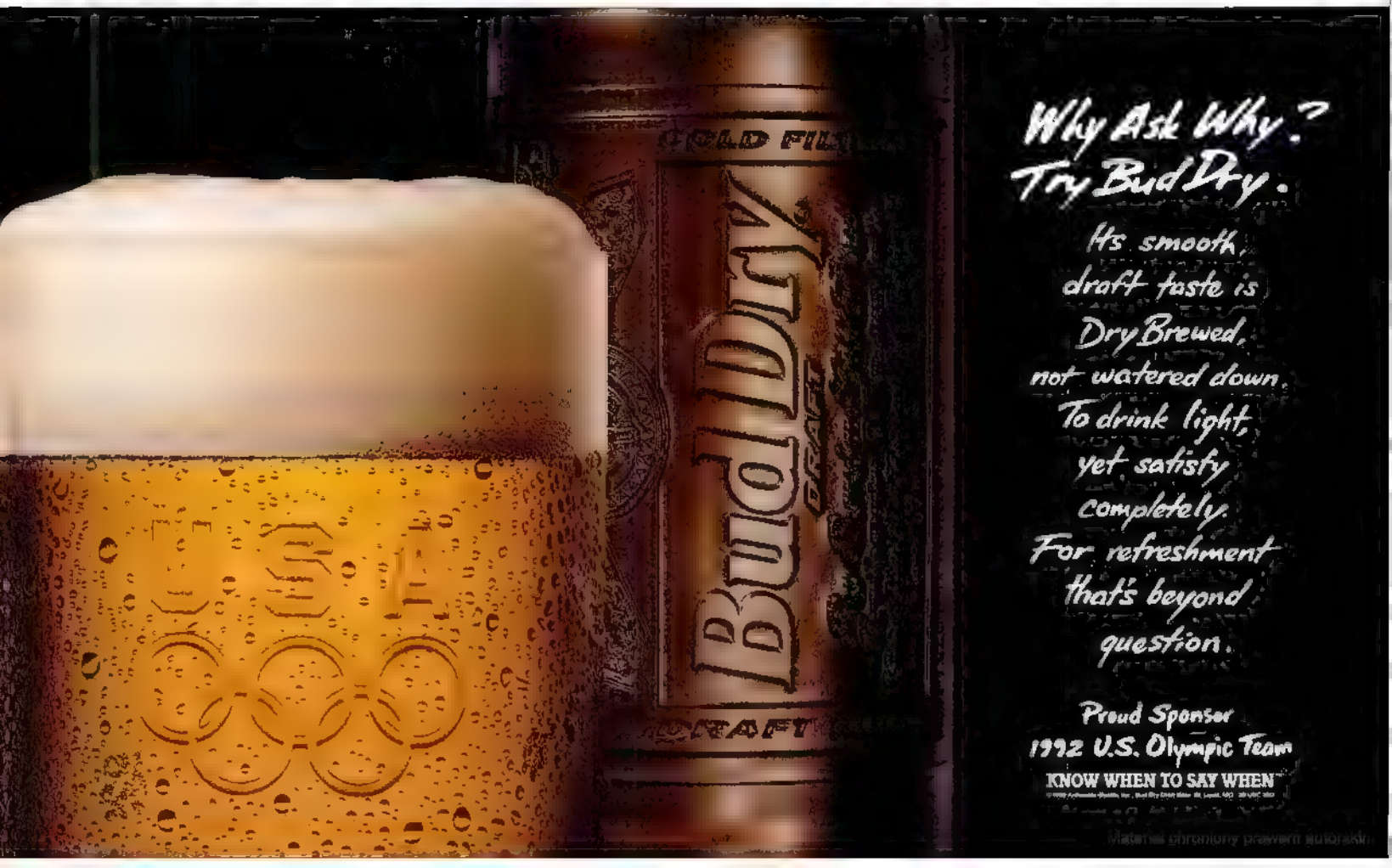
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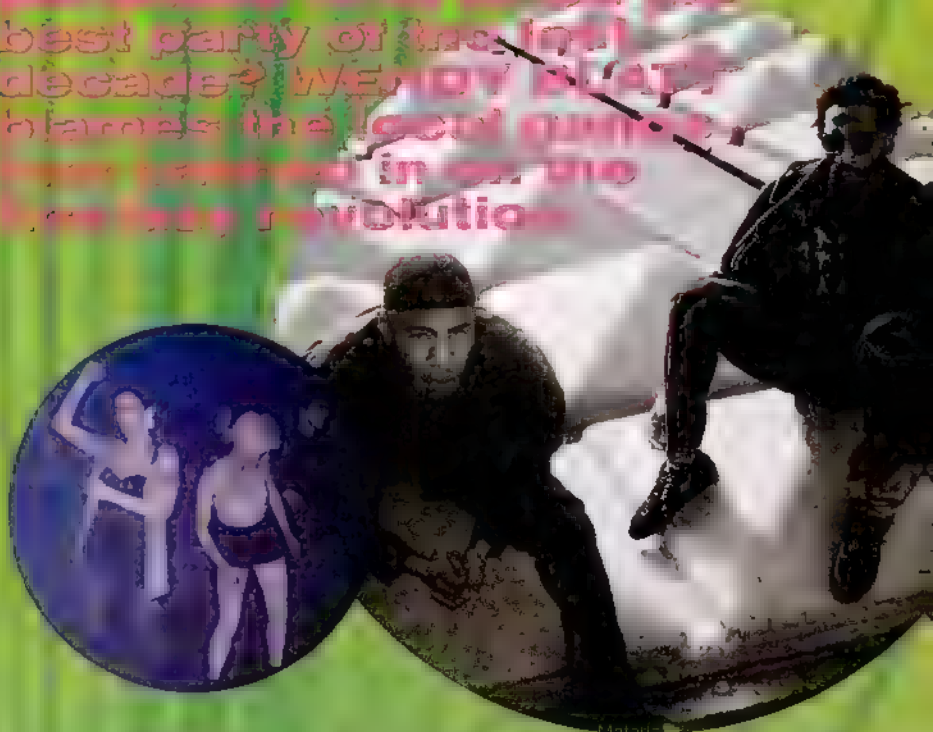
THE morning after

that you knew is no longer—England's youth utopian rave into pulsing best party of the last decade? Wendy Turner blames the [illegible] in the revolution



Left, top to bottom, Leroy Richardson of the Hacienda, at its height the most famous dance club in the world, Andy Robinson, Manchester DJ and programmer for the band Electronic, the Hacienda club. ***Clockwise from above,*** graffiti outside the Kitchen, the rave spot that begat Konspiracy, Shelly's in Stoke-on-Trent, where they start lining up by the hundreds at 6:30 P.M. for a night of raving—doors open at 8:00 P.M., a Konspiracy of two—Chris and Tomlyn, the Jam MCs, slaves to the rave. "What's your name, where are you from, and what have you had?"

At 3:00 A.M., hundreds of people are crowded into a five-room flat in Moss Side, spilling out onto the balcony. Some are sprawled about a darkened "chill-out room," the one with furniture. The only features in the rest of the apartment are strobe lights, lasers, and hard-core techno house, playing loud. The dancers' hand movements suggest they think they've become the record, and the whites of their eyes are too big for their heads. Almost everyone is in baggy jeans and loose T-shirts—Manchester street fashion for males and females of all ages. They've probably been to clubs earlier, but only to warm up for Adam's rave, an after-hours event downstairs and across the square from his home. The housing project is abandoned; there are mounds of trash out front, it smells foul, and the complex looks like it's been burned in several places. No more than 10 to 15 percent of the units are occupied and those by squatters, so it's easy to move the party flat every week. The wild dogs that roam the estate during the day aren't a problem on rave night; the sound bothers them almost as much as it does the police dogs that will be there later.

Everyone who attends is risking arrest, and Adam knows why they're willing. "For the energy, dance is a really good thing," he says. "Dance is an expression, and we all love to express ourselves to techno music." It's been suggested you can't find feeling in this music, and Adam's insulted by the idea. "Of course I do, fucking of course I do. Techno sounds just make my body bounce—you can do any movement and it will fit into the beat. You don't have to be a top dancer, it just comes natural. Take a couple of 'E' [hits of Ecstasy], a gram of speed, and you're there all night."

Techno house is the sound of Manchester, having achieved massive commercial success without losing contact with the underground. Derived from club music with all the heart and soul removed, techno is cold, hard, uncompromising street music, mechanically precise and with bass that vibrates your bones.

At Eastern Bloc, the region's premier progressive record store, "every kind of house is big now," says Mike Power, known as Mad Mick. "But especially the harder stuff, the dance music that's almost heavy metal." It's taking off all over England and in the United States, but nowhere is it harder than in Manchester. "There's a regional dividing line," Power notes. "We like the harder tunes, we like to party harder up north. It was the same with all musics—with the northern soul at Wigan Casino, we like our soul heavier than soul. We have a harder edge up here, and we appreciate a harder tune."

In the beginning, acid house seemed to be about peace and harmony; they called 1988 the Summer of Love. "Ecstasy had been available underground before," says Leroy Richardson, the Hacienda club's manager and head of security from before all the fuss started until mid-1989, "but then there seemed to be a massive, big explosion, and everybody was taking it. Everything happened at the same time—the music was right, the drug was right, the time was right." Jolly Roger's "Acid Man," LNR's "Work It to the Bone," Royal House's "Can You Party?" and Kechia Jenkins's "I Need Somebody" were among the major "E" anthems of the day, and DJ Mike Pickering's reputation was spreading worldwide.

"When the house sounds of Chicago hit, all of a sudden things changed," remembers a Hacienda bartender. "People had been drinking brandy and Coke, brandy, and Babychams [miniature bottles of champagne], then all of a sudden faces were coming back night after night asking for bottles of Pepsi, and you'd wonder what was going on. The first time I came into contact with 'E' was when Shaun [Ryder of Happy Mondays] used to leave me a half as a tip, every night, and I'd give them away because I didn't do drugs. Months later when I finally got into it, I remember thinking about how many 'E's, how many pounds' worth, I'd passed on."

Owned by Factory Records' Tony Wilson, who nurtured such acts as Happy Mondays, Joy Division, and New Order, Hacienda was accustomed to the regular presence of local bands long before the "E" scene got going; by the time it reached full gear the club had become a nightly home base for the city's musicians, their road crews, techs, and studio collaborators, DJs, fashion designers, graphic artists—most of the creative people in town were in one way or another part of the vibe.

"I remember being there one night, raving on with about 300 people," reminisces a former Kitchen patron, "and downstairs Cheatham Hill and Moss Side were having a gunfight. No one seemed to mind."

Even for people not actually on drugs, the feeling came through. "I remember Shaun coming up to me one night and saying, 'Oh, I can tell you're on one tonight!' " recalls another former Hacienda employee, "and I wasn't. It was just because there was such an incredible buzz in the whole place. You could stand back and watch everybody else getting completely off their heads, and you didn't have to do it yourself because the atmosphere was there. I've got tapes of some of those nights from late 1987, and they're still great. I still have this mental picture of these hairdressers standing around the bar in their Galliano suits and Comme des Garçons, complete style victims, and six months later they were all wearing baggy T-shirts and trainers." "It was so open and so all-encompassing," remembers one scenester. "And the drugs were so completely a part of what was happening with the music, you had to remind yourself that this was very illegal. Because everyone was doing it, and it was all so innocent."

The Kitchen was the other important club in town, an illegal all-nighter on the top floor of a Hulme housing estate. A wall was knocked down between two flats for the space; music was provided by a DJ team called the Jam MCs (Chris and Tomlyn), who also played many of the larger raves around the North. Close to a thousand people a night came from all over the U.K.; it was a rough neighborhood, but people weren't bothered. "I remember being there one night, raving on with about 300 people," reminisces a former patron, "and downstairs Cheatham Hill and Moss Side were having a gunfight. No one seemed to mind."

Other promoters, DJs, and bands showed up on a regular basis. Members of the Stone Roses, the Smiths, the Farm, New Order, and the Charlatans partied there. Happy Mondays and Mike Pickering were regulars. Eventually, the Kitchen crew went legal; with Chris as the licensee, Konspiracy opened in November 1989.

But there was quickly a lot more to it than people loosening up and getting comfortable with new influences and in new situations; as always, the northerners took it a step further and put a harder edge on it.

"Traditionally," notes one longtime Manchester resident, "blacks have always controlled the naturals [cannabis, cocaine, heroin] and whites have controlled the chemicals [hallucinogens, pharmaceuticals]." When acid house exploded there was far too much money in "E" for this division of territory to be allowed to stand unchallenged. Black and white drug gangs were put into direct competition, and neither hesitated to take their fights directly into the clubs.

"Do you want to know why I don't deal anymore?" a kid asks me one day in Factory Records' Dry Bar. "See that guy over there? He robbed a friend of mine of bunches of 'E's a few years ago, told him to get out of the business. That one over there told another friend of mine to stay in business, working for him. And that one, he held a gun on me in my own car." None of the people he's pointed at look any rougher than the rest of the patrons, but people know who they are and offer respect; club promoters and DJs who pass through the room acknowledge them with barely perceptible nods. By the end of 1988, the business the drug gangs wanted was at the clubs, so that's where they had to be.

"They didn't actually trade on the premises," says Leroy, describing the drug dealers' methods. "They had people to do it for them. Or the people who actually started it up, they would force these people to do it for them and take a cut for actually doing nothing. We're not talking about somebody being taxed fifty pounds, we're talking five hundred or five thousand. Then they started moving into the warehouse parties all over the northwest."

By 1989 the entire country was raving, consuming masses of drugs and dancing until noon the following day. "People would come up to you at a rave," remembers Andy Robinson, programmer for the band Electronic, "and ask what's your name, where are you from, and what have you had? And you'd say, 'My name's Bill, I'm from Leeds, two microdot." White, guitar-oriented rock bands were getting into underground black dance music in a big way, and you could hear it on their records. Tracks like the Stone Roses' "Fool's Gold," Happy Mon-

ALL PHOTOS BY JEFF PANTON; TOP RIGHT PHOTO BY TODD CRAFT

days' "Hallelujah," and the Farm's "Stepping Stone" ran rave music up the pop charts.

If Hacienda was the top white club in Manchester, Konspiracy quickly became the No. 1 black club. The dance explosion of 1988 and 1989 had ensured that the music at both clubs, their clientele, and the drugs of choice overlapped, and the gangs wanted in on both. But when they pushed their way in, they just took all the fun out of the scene and with it, the music.

"With the first explosion of house and Ecstasy," remembers Richardson, "seven days a week you could go somewhere, and it was really a good time. This died down when the gangs went from one place to another as well, following the market, doing exactly the same in all the places. One by one people were closing, saying it's just not worth it." By 1989 the gangs were ready to take on the big clubs, and Hacienda and Konspiracy took the worst of the assault. "The thugs weren't actually clever people," concludes Leroy. "They couldn't understand they were killing their own livelihood."

It doesn't necessarily take a large body count to generate terror. If half a dozen guys in masks run through your club one night with machetes, breaking people's arms and cutting them (as happened at the Reno in one of the earlier gang-war incidents), who's going to stop them? People were, and still are, in fear for their lives. England is a country where regular police don't carry guns and no private citizen would ever own a weapon. There quickly developed a vicious cycle. The more trouble there was at a club, the rougher the element it attracted, and the more people who were just into the music didn't want to bother going. The musically literate audience, interested in a diversity of sounds, went home, their place taken by people looking merely for a soundtrack to their drugs.

Clubgoers deciding to stay home might have based their decision on the odds of running into Cheatham Hill's "White" Tony Johnson, whose name people were afraid to even say in public when he was alive. "It might get back to him that you were talking about him," someone explains, "and since he wouldn't know what you'd said he'd assume it was something he should be angry about." Johnson was shot to death in spring 1991, reputedly in self-defense, by one of his closest associates. Several gang leaders were considered such psychopaths that if they were in a club, even if they weren't causing any problem at that moment, everyone who recognized them left immediately. "You just knew," a DJ explains, "that if they were around someone was going to get hurt."

By 1989, the Hacienda was possibly the most famous dance club in the world, and the gangs behaved as if it were there strictly for their benefit. "At ten o'clock at night," remembers a bartender, "we were absolutely mad, mad busy—short behind the bar—and Tony [Johnson] would come up and demand we make him a plate full of sandwiches. If the bar manager said no, we're too busy, he'd intimidate the bar staff and make them do it." "These people didn't understand the limit," says Richardson. "Okay, three of them get in the door for nothing, so next week five of them turn up. The week after that, the extra two friends each show up with five of their friends, and it goes on and on."

"When Leroy left, there was no visible figurehead," a waitress recalls, "and the doormen just didn't want to give a damn. There were occasions when bar staff were glassed or smashed, and they did nothing. One time when I came in to work, my boss, the general manager, told me 'Cheatham's here, but don't worry. I've told them they can do whatever they want.' We were all intimidated. It wasn't more than a few weeks later that he [the manager] was found in the back office, hands over his face, moaning, 'Somebody, please do something,' while gangs ran wild in the main room, emptying tills, breaking bottles, mugging the punters [paying customers], and flinging furniture over the railings." A high-ranking member of the Hacienda's management team left town after receiving a death threat.

At Konspiracy it was the same. On opening night it already had a hard-core clientele, featuring large contingents from three of the city's gangs, each of whom who treated the club as their own private fiefdom. "They'd want their people at the door, all their friends in for free, to order drinks and not pay for them, and to openly sell drugs in the place," remembers a staffer. "People were forced to sell drugs for them, buy drugs from them, or simply mugged. An owner used to tell me we were losing £300 a night in liquor off these guys, then it got into £400, and in the end they'd just walk behind the bar and take a bottle of vodka or six bottles of champagne. I tried, but what do you do?"

By mid-1990, students were getting mugged, beaten up, and slashed often enough that they were afraid to patronize what was by then the world's most famous dance music scene.

"Often there'd be Cheatham Hill and Salford in there at the same time," says an employee. "We could try to keep them in different rooms, but it was hairy." Guns were pulled at the door, DJs were maced, bar staffers had to be smuggled out through the basement, and on any given night any gang might decided it was their prerogative to decide who got in. When an employee was attacked over the bar and threatened with kidnapping, her employer's best advice was for her to leave.

"A few months into it," says Tomlyn, "I remember noticing how people were dressed, really down and out, 'scally' style [scallies are street-smart, working-class white kids]. It had changed suddenly from more decent people, people who made an effort when they went out, not just a pair of jeans and top with a hood on it. It used to be a place to be seen, and now I could see what it was turning into. They were just 'E'-ed scallies, smashing the light bulbs in the sockets so the bouncers couldn't see what they were up to, and so you couldn't replace the bulbs. It came to me it was really getting seedy."

By early 1990, it was clear drugs had overtaken music as the most important part of the scene, and dealers had all the juice. When American media people were invited to Manchester the weekend of a major hometown show, a label official who wanted me to do a story on the scene delivered tickets for one night, admission to the Hacienda if I got there before 9:00 P.M., and some second-string artists to interview. I mentioned this as a problem to a local drug dealer I happened to know, who took me past huge lines and into both clubs instantly, for free, after they were well past capacity; he walked me backstage to get me a laminated tag good for both nights. At the Hacienda, he introduced me to two of the most famous artists in the city. Instead of shaking my hand when I offered it, the first star turned it palm up and poured out a quarter gram of cocaine, "because you shouldn't be in here without drugs." When my jaw dropped open in surprise, the second popped an "E" into my mouth.

Moderate drug use had helped make the Manchester scene happen; extreme drug use threatened to kill it. "There were lowlifes around the clubs from the beginning," notes Robinson, "but it was all pretty cool, everyone was friendly. Later on it started getting heavier and I stopped going out. People were being threatened, people were being robbed. It never happened to me personally, but it just didn't feel right. It started going sour—at first it was the beautiful people, the love drug and whatever. There wasn't any sex involved because everyone was too far gone, but there was plenty of hugging, smiling, and that sort of thing. But after sustained periods of drug abuse, people start getting nasty, I think. And more people were finding out about it, different people, and that changed it, too—the music started getting boring because the crowds were into the DJs playing the same thing all night. I couldn't get into it anymore."

By mid-1990, students were getting mugged, beaten up, and slashed often enough that they were afraid to patronize what was by then the world's most famous dance music scene. Eventually the authorities were forced to take the only action they considered viable; they moved to close the clubs. In all, more than half a dozen clubs had their licenses revoked; Hacienda and Konspiracy were the only ones who fought it. At Konspiracy's license-revocation hearing, police noted among their complaints that people were afraid to enter the club; Chris was judged "an unfit and improper person," and the license was revoked.

The Hacienda won its court case, but after Christmas a gun was pulled on a doorman, and, says Richardson, "We closed the club ourselves and brought it to the attention of the country that here's a club, here's a business that had to close down because we couldn't get protection [from the authorities]. If it had been a Marks & Spencers [supermarket chain] that closed down because their shoplifting was so high, I'm sure the police would have helped."

By early 1991, Manchester's club scene was decimated.

IN THE LAST YEAR, THE MUSIC HAS GOTTEN CONSISTENTLY harder, as have the people on the scene and the drugs involved. It doesn't feel joyous anymore; on an almost instinctive level, everything about it now feels seedy. Other than a few of the biggest stars, many of the people who've done well from the changes wrought by acid house have either left town or left the enterprise. One pair of rave promoters, the Donnelly brothers, have long since gotten out of that business and opened a fashion company with the slogan "Dedicated to Dodgin' the Rain 'n' Bullets." One of their top-sellers is a T-shirt emblazoned GIBRALTAR ("Because everybody's smoking rock these days," says the designer).

A few years ago the popularity of underground black club music pushed rock to become more danceable; now the city is split into musical camps as black and white club music heads off in completely opposite directions. Deep house has gotten deeper, and the techno's gotten harder, faster, and heavier. The records that really explode out of Eastern Bloc these days, says Mad Mick, "would have to be the mental tunes, all the really heavy tunes. The heavier the better, it seems. It's like an addiction, they want it harder and harder. And if it doesn't have that tempo and that aggressiveness, it's not going to interest them. Rave music just seems to batter you to death; it doesn't do anything for me, but for everybody else, yeah, because of the drugs that are involved. We sell tons of it, they can't get enough."

At Shelly's in Stoke-on-Trent (where Andy Robinson now DJs), they start lining up by the hundreds at 6:30 for a club that opens at 8:00. I ask an 18-year-old on line what he might do if he weren't here—"I'd be at some other rave." Another 18-year-old tells me he's at this particular rave because "They have the best 'E' here." The drugs and music are inseparable—these kids won't listen to music straight, or take the drugs to do anything other than go out raving. When we arrive early at a club on Wigan Pier the BPM [beats per minute] is well past 120 and climbing. By midnight techno is pounding so hard it must register off the Richter scale. Total strangers are stroking my hair and trying to hug me. I'm not aware of any proven psychological link between substances ingested and preferred auditory stimulation but it's worth looking into.

Adam continues to promote nonprofit parties so it will be there for him to attend. "When we're out of our faces in a club, we want to go somewhere and there's nowhere to go," says Adam. "What use is it coming home and between three of you going mad in the house, when you can have a hundred people and bring the club into your house? If I don't want the vibe, if I feel like I want a rest, I won't have a party. But I know for a fact if I'm 'E'-ed out of my face, with speed on the bottom of it, I'm going to want a vibe." He's totally uninterested in promoting legally. "If we went to a proper club and tried to make money at it," Adam asks, the tone of voice suggesting this should be self-evident, "it would just ruin it, wouldn't it?"

"I actually go to Glasgow a lot," says Richardson, who is working security again at the reopened Hacienda, "which is one of the best cities for nightlife you've ever been to. It's like a fledgling Manchester, so all the enthusiasm is still there."

"On those rare occasions now when I go to Hacienda," says Robinson, "I don't see anybody I know there."

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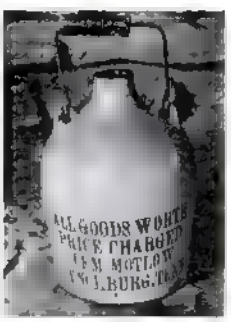

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ANTIHERO ON THE GULF WAR'S FIRST ANNIVERSARY, DANNY SCHECHTER LOOKS AT AN UNREPORTED CASUALTY—THE DEATH OF A FREE AND OBJECTIVE TELEVISION PRESS.

A year after Desert Storm, Saddam Hussein still rules a devastated land. The Kuwaiti royal family is back on its throne with its own human-rights

abuses a daily unwritten-about routine. Perhaps now, as public ardor cools and the yellow ribbons yellow, journalists can confront their own complicity in selling this war in the guise of reporting it. It is time to admit that major media institutions became willing collaborators of an orchestrated government policy.

R.W. Apple of the *New York Times* is livid at the way the Pentagon pool system deliberately interfered with the free flow of information. At a recent forum, he called the military minders incompetent and accused the government of curtailing freedom of the press. Jonathan Alter of *Newsweek* went so far as to call on his colleagues to risk jail and violate military restrictions the next time that journalists are corralled into pools. CNN's Bernard Shaw acknowledged to a university conference that the American people "never got the whole story."

This skepticism found more adherents because of how the war turned out—with what the UN has called "apocalyptic" damage in Iraq, a country that suffered as many as 200,000 military fatalities, many inflicted as their troops fled Kuwait at the U.S.'s request, only to be wiped out in what an Air Force pilot called a "turkey shoot"; with Hussein's massacre of the Kurds and the Shia Muslims; and nearly five million people displaced across the region.

The television news coverage of the war never showed us the scale of the suffering or prepared us for the cycle of upheavals, reprisals, and arms sales to follow.

Instead, it substituted images for information. Some journalists later said that the power of the mighty Iraqi army had been deliberately misrepresented and exaggerated; that only a minority of the munitions used were so-called smart weapons; that we may have been as responsible for the oil spills in the Gulf as Iraq; that the Patriots caused more damage than the Scuds; that there may have been no basis for the chemical weapons scare; that the real cost of the war could end up being ten times the official estimate, once you factor in veterans' benefits and war debt.

The packaging of this coverage—with its cast of military experts, nose cone footage, and absence of critical analysis—is the product of a television system that itself is rarely covered.

To get at how TV news gets at us, you have to put television itself into the kind of context that it rarely puts the issues it is covering. And unfortunately, the people who can do that best—the professionals who sit in at the network morning meetings that decide the story lineups, who decide which images to send our way, and who know what parts of their scripts get approved and what they have to cut out for reasons of time and content—are part of the news system themselves. It's hard to be reflective when you are caught up in the day-to-day, especially during those periods of crisis such as round-the-clock gulf coverage when the adrenaline rush has a contagious quality.

As an insider, you soon discover that corporate cultures exist within news organizations the way they do in other organizations—with unwritten rules steering you toward being part of the team. TV news organizations are structured into hierarchies and governed by codes of conduct that tend toward a sameness of approach, even a homogenization of what programmers call "product."

It hasn't always been this way. For years, the "big three" networks had worked hard to project distinctive identities. I once heard an executive describe the different network news organizations this way: CBS was referred to as "the Church"; NBC, "the Morgue"; and ABC, "the Asylum." Here's why: William Paley's CBS built itself on image and moral purpose—from the understated simplicity of its eye-like logo to its mystique as the network of Edward R. Murrow and Walter Cronkite. NBC was its staid alter ego with newsrooms known for the lowest decibel levels and the Waspiest decorum. ABC was considered the most aggressive and experimental, the new kid on the block, younger and more personality driven, the network of the famous and infamous (Barbara Walters, Howard Cosell, and even Geraldo Rivera).

Today, all of these differences are blurred, with Dan Rather's former producer at CBS producing ABC's Ted Koppel, with former NBC executives on ABC's payroll, and on and on. The networks' graphics may feature different colors and designs

Danny Schechter is executive producer at Globalvision Inc., an independent production company whose projects have included the award-winning PBS series South Africa Now.

Troops from the 101st Airborne Division during a chemical alert at the aptly titled Desert "Staging" Area in Saudi Arabia. Were the media images sent back to the U.S. the product of a free press, or part of the government's carefully orchestrated PR?

WORLD WIDE PHOTOS

but their stories, their approach, and their "feel" are all pretty much the same. Even CNN, which came to life in the '80s, has essentially copied existing formats. Its ability to "go live" has been its signature, but the content of CNN is the content of mainstream TV news—only there's more of it and it's global.

Why this sameness? A new book, David Altheide and Robert Snow's *Media Worlds in the Postjournalism Era*, offers a provocative explanation. The TV media, they say, has its own imperatives, what they call "media logic," turning the news world ultimately into a world of its own—with its own language, grammar, ideology, and interests. What is and isn't covered often has has much to do with how a program is seeking to position itself before the perceived or real demographics of a program's audience as the inherent importance of any one story.

"The journalism enterprise," Altheide and Snow contend, "especially TV news, essentially is reporting on itself; it addresses events that are cast in its own formats and frames of relevance, rather than attempting to understand the events in their own terms, and then trying to communicate the complexities and ambiguities of real-world conditions."

DURING THE GULF WAR, A BILLION EYEBALLS around the world were glued to CNN, watching what *Village Voice* writer Gary Indiana called "the Home Shopping Channel by other means"—made-for-TV Pentagon home videos which may have been designed as much for selling weapons systems to envious allies than bringing information to news-hungry Americans.

The war was the kind of story TV news organizations live for. It was a chance for them to show their stuff, prove their mettle, and make their reputations. (And today, sell their video cassettes!) Almost all of the super reporters of the Murrow era established their bona fides during World War II. Another generation of journalists catapulted to the top of the profession thanks to Vietnam. The Gulf War seemed to offer another such opportunity. For TV news organizations struggling to justify their outsize budgets to owners with bottom-line orientations, the war promised more resources and higher ratings. What more is there?

At the height of Desert Storm, a research team found that the more TV news people watched the less they actually knew.

Well, for starters, there is understanding. At the height of Desert Storm, a University of Massachusetts survey research team probed ordinary Americans for the basis of their jingoism and concluded that 1) most people actually knew very little about the issues on which they had strong opinions, 2) they tended to echo government policy justifications, and 3) the more TV news they watched, the less they actually knew.

That's because news and truth were frequently worlds apart. The behind-the-scenes story of the politics and economics that created Hussein's power—including the role of the United States—was rarely told. In fact, a poll showed that 73 percent of the American people said they didn't know the U.S. was arming Hussein during the ten-year Iran-Iraq war. No wonder then that the events that led to the war and their context were barely explained.

It was barely treated in popular culture, either—the place where people tend to learn as much about reality these days as they do through news. When 41 prominent musicians remade John Lennon's antiwar anthem "Give Peace a Chance," a documentary expressing their ideas was never broadcast on MTV or other outlets. (*MTV News*, to its credit, did report on antiwar protests and the silence of the music industry overall.) In contrast, the "Voices That Care" song turned up in a send-off for the yellow-ribbon sentiment. Organizers tried to picture it as "nonpolitical" but the songwriter David Foster made no secret of his Republican sympathies. The song

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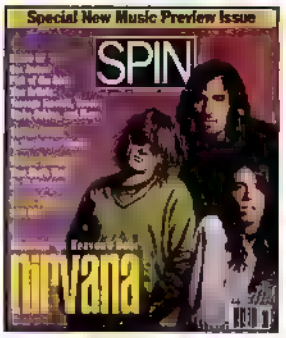

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AIDS

WORDS FROM THE FRONT

AIDS is no longer confined exclusively to homosexual men and IV drug users. In fact, it never was. VICTORIA A. BROWNWORTH reports the hard facts about women and AIDS and the heterosexual epidemic.

MAGIC JOHNSON'S ANNOUNCEMENT of his HIV status had the effect, in the words of one AIDS activist, of "finally filing HIV and heterosexual under the same heading in the epidemic."

Alison Gertz will never be the household name Johnson is, but about three years ago she too went public with her HIV status. Her announcement brought her instant celebrity. She was featured in the *New York Times*, on the cover of *People* magazine, and in an interview with Barbara Walters on ABC's *20/20*.

Johnson and Gertz were newsworthy because of their "atypical" profiles; their HIV status seems at odds with what has been reported about risk and HIV. Gertz was raised on Park Avenue: At 20 years old, white, with no history of drug use, she was at a seemingly low risk for HIV. Similarly, Johnson was also at low risk: Of the reported HIV cases in the U.S., only 3 percent were solely through heterosexual female-to-male transmission.

But while the profile for heterosexual men has changed very little in the past five years of the epidemic, the profile for heterosexual women has changed dramatically. Once perceived by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as a disease only of men and prostitutes, AIDS is now considered a major health risk for women—particularly young women of childbearing age (15 to 44). The contrast between male and female AIDS is so dramatic that some researchers consider them two different diseases.

"There is no question that we are in the midst of a large-scale epidemic of AIDS among women," said Anna Forbes, cofounder of ActionAIDS, Pennsylvania's largest AIDS service organization and a founding member of the Women and AIDS Network.

Michael Fumento, author of the controversial book *The Myth of Heterosexual AIDS* (Basic Books) and an AIDS analyst for the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, argues in his book that AIDS among heterosexual men in the U.S. is almost nonexistent, and that the statistics regarding such cases are largely inflated by the CDC and NIH. Conversely, Fumento argues that the numbers regarding the spread of AIDS in women are underrepresented.

"We have to remember that the CDC statistics are only as good as the states that are reporting them and as true as what people are saying about the means of transmission," Fumento told SPIN. "We get these statistics by taking people's word for how they got the disease. Homosexuals are telling the truth about their risk category and so are IV drug users. Heterosexual men are lying—they will tell a woman anything to get into her pants, including that they have never used IV drugs or never had a homosexual experience."

Fumento argues that heterosexual women are getting AIDS largely *because* men are lying about their risk factors for AIDS.

"The case is overstated for men, but women are telling the truth and the partner studies that we've seen bear this out. It makes sense that women are getting more AIDS because male to female transmission is much more efficient—it's much easier for a man to infect a woman. Most guys *know* they are in a risk group, they just don't tell their female partner. So we have to look behind these CDC stats to see how the disease is really being transmitted. But what we do know is that heterosexual women are getting the disease and they are getting it from men."

One of the first people to look at the incidence of AIDS among women was Dr. Margaret Fischl of the University of Miami. In the first study conducted on women and AIDS in 1986, Fischl found that women were dying of AIDS at a much faster rate than men: Within 1 to 6 months of diagnosis as compared with 10 to 18 months in men. Similar studies conducted in San Francisco a year later produced nearly identical results.

According to the CDC, the number of women contracting AIDS from heterosexual contact alone continues to rise every year. As of November 1991, 20,509 women in the U.S. were reported with AIDS. Of those, 34 percent had contracted the disease through heterosexual contact, the second highest risk category.

Today, over 21,000 women have been diagnosed with AIDS in the U.S. and over 100,000 have HIV. AIDS is the leading cause of death for women between the ages of 15 and 40 in New York City and Newark. It is the third leading cause of death in that age group in Miami. In 1991, it became the fifth leading cause of death among women between the ages of 15 and 44—up from eighth place in 1987. And in 1990, the CDC reported that AIDS cases among women had risen by 31 percent over the previous year—compared with an 18 percent increase among men. Over 85 percent of reported cases in women are among those 40 and younger.

Alison Gertz is no longer an anomaly.

DIANA CRAFT

But there are those who question if she ever really was. According to the CDC's own statistics, between 1981 and 1988 there was a dramatic increase in pneumonia deaths among women in some Eastern cities with high HIV populations. And the CDC also notes that it underreports AIDS cases in women on an average of 15 to 20 percent. AIDS activists and health workers put the percentage at closer to 40 percent.

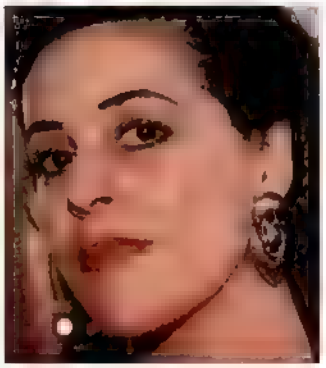
But despite the tremendous *reported* increase in the disease among heterosexual women, the CDC does not even compile statistics on lesbians and AIDS. And it has not yet written diagnostic tests for women with AIDS, as it has for men. The CDC defined AIDS diagnosis through *men* in 1981; it revised its definition of AIDS and the opportunistic infections leading to a diagnosis of AIDS in 1985. There have been no significant changes by the CDC in those guidelines since then—and women have never been examined by the CDC for alternative presentation of the disease, even though the number of women with AIDS has increased from 3 percent of the total in 1981 to 18 percent in 1991.

What Fischl found was that women were presenting with much more pronounced opportunistic infections than their male counterparts. They were much sicker at the point of diagnosis. Subsequent studies show that presentation of AIDS in women is almost wholly different than it is in men. Some researchers have even suggested that AIDS is a wholly different disease in women than it is in men. Available statistics seem to bear this out.

The most common opportunistic infections in men with AIDS are pneumocystis pneumonia (PCP), Kaposi's sarcoma (KS), lymphoma, and tuberculosis. Women presenting with HIV disease have almost no incidence of KS or PCP, but they do have other forms of pneumonia, a higher incidence of TB and assorted gynecological cancers. The latter lead in the cause of death for women with AIDS. Yet the CDC does not recognize any of these cancers as appropriate to an AIDS *diagnosis*, even though studies conducted by the federal government link certain gynecological cancers with HIV.

A study conducted by Dr. Sten Vermund, chief of AIDS epidemiology at the National Institute for Allergies and Infectious Diseases (NIAID), determined that women with both HIV and HPV (human papilloma virus, a sexually transmitted disease linked to HIV transmission, commonly known as venereal warts) were 12 times as likely as non-HIV-infected women to have cervical cancer.

AIDS is now considered a major health risk for women—particularly young women.



Three years ago Alison Gertz became famous as "the woman with HIV," appearing on magazine covers and television. Today there are over 100,000 women like her.

What this means, say experts in the field such as Dr. Karen Hein, director of the Adolescent AIDS Program at Montefiore Hospital in the Bronx, and Dr. Marla J. Gold, health commissioner for infectious disease control in Philadelphia, is that women are denied access to health care and insurance benefits—even governmental health benefits—because they do not fit the criteria set by the CDC. "Because many of these women are poor," says Gold, "regardless of whether they acquired AIDS through intravenous drug use or heterosexual sex, they have no primary health care outside of the 'traditional' public health system. And that system often isn't even *looking* for the disease in women, let alone treating for it."

The variety of factors given for the differences in the presentation of AIDS in women and men include hormonal differences, failure by physicians to diagnose the disease until the later stages, and less access—particularly by poor women and women of color—to medical care on a regular basis.

Dr. Hein and Dr. Antonia C. Novello, U.S. surgeon general, have both campaigned for education of women about HIV, particularly adolescents. Says Hein, "[Gertz] isn't the only one. HIV is popping up in the middle of the teenage community, among girls, it's everywhere we look." Novello says, "Adolescent women have the highest rate of gonorrhea for *all* females, and gonorrhea, because it produces open infections, can itself be a contributing factor to the transmission of HIV/AIDS. By the year 2000, the number of women with AIDS will begin to equal the number of men with the disease." Another cofactor cited by these experts is the pandemic of chlamydia, an STD now infecting over 17 million women in the U.S. Novello, Hein, Forbes, and others also cite pregnancy as a problem related to HIV.

The range of problems associated with downplaying or ignoring the epidemic in women has also become a focus for the American Civil Liberties Union AIDS Project. Elizabeth Cooper, staff counsel for the national headquarters, says the issues are critical. "There is this definite push for testing of women of childbearing age, counseling for abortion and sterilization, refusal of treatment to women who are HIV infected," she says. "The New York City Commission on Human Rights did a survey which found that some reproductive health services and clinics would not provide services to women who were infected, or charged more for those services."

ROBIN PLATZER

Cooper adds that the focus on testing of women takes dollars away from the real areas of need, like drug rehabilitation programs for women who are at high risk for HIV-complicated pregnancies, low-income health services for women, and testing of drugs for HIV in women.

"It is critically important that the American public stop thinking that testing is equivalent to curing or stemming the spread of HIV. For women the reality is that there is more and more 'coercive counseling' but fewer and fewer resources for actual health care once a woman is infected. And the lack of attention to AIDS drugs for women is an essential point in that care."

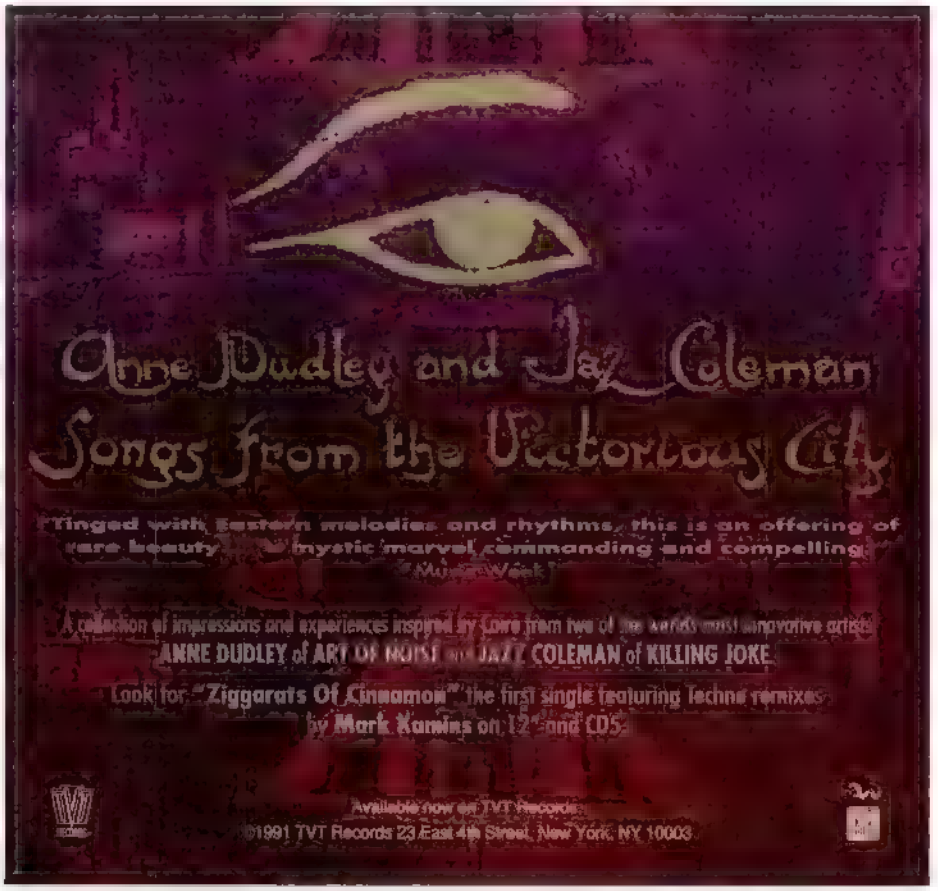
Treatments remain limited for women with HIV or AIDS because of the CDC guidelines and the reluctance by the government to sponsor clinical trials of AIDS drugs. None of the treatments currently available—either AZT or ddI or other, experimental, treatments—have been tested on women. And some researchers believe that the radical differences in the disease among women makes use of these drugs without such testing extremely dangerous. In 63 trials of AZT prior to 1987 approval for use on *all* patients with AIDS and HIV, *none* was conducted on women in any stage of the disease. And if a women wants to be included in a clinical trial, she must prove she has been sterilized or that she is on birth control preventing any possibility of pregnancy.

Research at the NIH itself has shown that women may need far lower doses of such commonly used drugs as AZT, ddI, or Peptide T. No data exists on other experimental treatments and how they might affect women with HIV disease.

The full impact of AIDS and HIV disease on women remains largely a mystery due to the lack of progress by the CDC and NIH in charting the epidemic in women. Of intense concern for AIDS activists and members of the women's health-care movement is the question of whether AIDS and HIV are the same diseases in women that they are in men.

"There is still a lot of discussion [of the question] at AIDS conferences and health-care conferences," said Forbes. "Until the CDC starts collecting data and conducting cohort studies in women, there won't be a solid answer. But looking at the CDC guidelines alone would indicate some kind of answer: Almost none of the major opportunistic infections that are present in women are on the AIDS diagnostic list."

The issues, questions, and problems surrounding AIDS and HIV disease in women remain myriad and complex. Belinda Rochelle of the AIDS Action Council in Washington, D.C., concludes, "Health care for women in the U.S. is at an all-time low, so it is not surprising that AIDS in women is being ignored. Education is only part of the answer because there is still so much that we *don't* know about how this disease affects women. As has been true in so many areas of women's health—particularly for poor women, women of color, and young women—women are going to have to educate themselves about the disease and are going to have to create health-care alternatives for themselves as well. It shouldn't be their responsibility, though, because the entire country is going to bear the burden of this epidemic in women." ⊛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MOVING IMAGES

Why this national obsession with the extracurricular activities of *Beverly Hills, 90210*'s well-groomed student body? JONATHAN BERNSTEIN interviews the men behind the leaders of the new school.

Uptown Manhattan, Thursday night. A young couple, the epitome of casual elegance, exit a pricey and reputable trattoria. A cab pulls up to the curb to meet them. Suddenly, the girl is a blur of legs and silk, leaving her bewildered partner with a breathless "Gotta dive, *Beverly Hills, 90210*." We're talking about a show for all seasons here—one that inspires derision, empathy, envy, lust, confusion, and most of all, devotion.

Adolescent ensemble projects are no revelation, but few predecessors have struck with the atomic impact of Aaron Spelling's *Beverly Hills, 90210*. Why? Why this saga of transplanted Twin Cities teens struggling to reconcile their midwestern values with the decadence and dysfunctionality of their new surroundings? "In terms of stories, we're substantive rather than stylish," offers writer-producer Charles Rosin. "That MTV stuff's been done to death. We try to give a sense of time and place. This is the Beverly Hills of the '90s, not the '80s. Kids today have different things on their minds than they did five years ago. These aren't rich, spoiled teens—we're dealing with the complexity of being a teenager. We did a show on date rape, we've got the most honest use of teenage sexuality, we tackled drunk driving."

These were doubtless admirable shows, but they went virtually unseen. *90210* was a sleeper hit, slowly building up the groundswell of fans which brought an 11th-hour turnaround in the show's fortunes. "We did a show where the girls had a slumber party," explains Rosin, "and that night we became the No. 2 show in the biggest cities in the country." Suffocating media attention ensued. Luke (Dylan) Perry's furrowed brow became a prime adolescent bedroom accessory, Jason (Brandon) Priestley's sensitive stare ranking a close second. And those buff nu s: Brenda with the perfect bangs and the hamster cheeks; Kelly the icicle princess; Andrea the moral backbone; Emily the loose cannon; and . . .er . . . Tori Spelling's character. "The hype came secondary," Rosin says. "Teenage girls made this show a hit."

Clockwise from center: Ian Ziering as Steve, Jason Priestley (Brandon), Tori Spelling (Donna), Gabrielle Carteris (Andrea), Luke Perry (Dylan), Shannen Doherty (Brenda), and Jennie Garth (Kelly).

The interests of those teenage girls, allied with the clammy hands of ever-nervous sponsors, have placed unforeseen restrictions on the behind-camera talent, a prime case in point being the abrupt "hands off" notice placed on Brenda and Dylan when they started to sizzle. "Making Brenda sexual was a network idea in the first place," sniffs Rosin. Program creator Darren Star says, "We've had our brushes with censorship. As far as Brenda and Dylan went, we decided to just find another story. Having them get detached was, I guess, us kowtowing to censorship."

Star praises the cast's natural cool but these slang-free youngsters are hardly the constituency who put N.W.A and Metallica at No. 1. Admits Charles Rosin, "No, they wouldn't be into that. They'd listen to R.E.M." And few black faces add flavor to *90210*'s vanilla regulars. "I'd like to bring a black character onto the show but we can only bear so many regulars," explains Star, concluding that "we're not representative of every high school kid in America." True enough, but what about Tori Spelling's character? She's not representative of anything, she's just . . . there. Charles Rosin manfully takes up the challenge of defending the boss's daughter: "She's kind of a follower, she doesn't have any inner strength, she's sort of ditzy, she rounds out the ensemble nicely . . . ."

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Kafka **(Miramax)**
The living nightmare of a grinding soul-destroying job. Eyes following you wherever you turn. Voices always just out of earshot. The petty tyrannies of megalomaniac bureaucrats. So much for working here at SPIN. Jeremy Irons flinches, sweats, and spits up phlegm for most of Steven Soderbergh's sophomore offering. Exposed brain tissues and laughing lepers are only a part of the labyrinthine madness that threatens to outstrip the eponymous lead's own paranoid fantasies. Kafkaesque.

Naked Lunch **(20th Century Fox)**
More squishy bits. Cronenberg does Burroughs. Pus and come ooze from every orifice. Peter Weller and the mighty Judy Davis star; both are outshone by Chris Walas's astonishing array of puke-worthy FX. Expect all the kids on your block to go crazy over the giant talking cockroaches.

Roadside Prophets **(New Line)**
Laconic John Doe revs up his '57 Harley and sets off for Nevada. Along the way he hooks up with runty, whining Adam Horovitz. They bicker, bond, and benefit from the wisdom of Arlo Guthrie, Timothy Leary, and, as a member of the Symbionese Fast Food Front, John Cusack. The road goes on forever.

High Heels **(Miramax)**
Andalusian auteur Pedro Almodóvar can't seem to find his footing in this saga of mother, daughter, and murder. Almodóvar's attempts to temper his standard shriek with some maudlin moments effectively neuter the piece.

Freejack **(Morgan Creek)**
It's the future. Emilio Estevez is the victim of a time-travel experiment gone horrifically wrong. He's catapulted into a hostile new century where he finds himself not only on the run from the crazed accents and leering of Mick Jagger and David Johansen but also hiding from Anthony Hopkins's malevolent hiss. Help!

Jonathan Bernstein

LOGO BY CHRISTOPHER GALLO

DREAMING AMERICA

NOTES OF A NEW JACK

BY SCOTT POULSON-BRYANT

SCENES FROM BLACK HISTORY

I LOVE ANGRY BLACK MEN," THE publicist, a white woman, said. She pushed her long, dark hair dramatically behind one ear and smiled. I didn't know what to say. We were cruising along the Long Island Expressway, toward an interview with one of the artists that make up the few jewels in her hip hop crown. I didn't know what to say to that. I mean, I love angry black men, too, but did she expect me to tell her that? Did she expect me to respond at all?

I'VE ALWAYS LOVED DRAMA. I DON'T mean theater. Maybe I do, though: the theater of human livelihood, the theatrics of the day-to-day, when, in the thump of a heartbeat, some emotional curtain rises and the mundane transposes into the dizzingly wild. Once, strolling with my mother and father, I saw—and stopped and watched—a man curse a doorman for stepping on his shoe. The man was decked out in white polyester, his head swimming in a gallantly tilted top hat, an uptown breeze flapping the cape draped over his shoulders. He kept saying, "That's my shoe! That's my shoe, man!" He reminded me of my uncle when too many beers started his party motor revving at family gatherings. I remember my mother's tugs as she tried to yank me away from the growing crowd of onlookers. But I wouldn't budge. It wasn't the man's words or curses that compelled me to watch. It wasn't his shoe. It was something in his eyes that seemed to enjoy the horde of people surrounding him. I thought that he didn't really care about the shoe, he cared that he was being watched. I thought of that as the crowd pushed in closer, blocking my line of sight, and I surrendered to my mother's yanks. "Just a show-off," she said. "People like to make spectacles of themselves."

"Nothing but," my father murmured and grabbed my hand to pull me along. I looked up at him, and to this day I believe that he'd enjoyed the show as much as I did, if not more. His lips twittered around the cigarette he'd dropped my hand to light. He winked at me, careful not to let my mother witness this collaborative glee.

"I LIKED HIP HOP," MY BEST FRIEND recently told me, "back when it was still called rap. I liked it when it was called rhyming. You know, people had crews and the DJs had to be creative, scratching a beat into a break—those records like 'Ain't No Half Steppin'.' In high school we had the Slick Hard Crew, which ruled the projects over near the school; the M&M Crew in its gold sweatshirts with the black letters that it probably had made at Shopper's Village, where everybody bought designer jeans and necks at a discount; there were the girl rappers like the Classy Three; the Nasty Four and the 3 Micateers did basement parties and talent shows.

"Back then," my friend continued, "people learned raps so they could come to school the next day and show everybody they knew it. Nowadays it's all business, no pleasure."

THE PUBLICIST'S IMPERIALISM, THE caped man's audacity, my best friend's nostalgia: All of these things make me think of how I got into rap in the first place.

My mother hated to hear rap in the house. Like most people of her generation, I think she was afraid of the loud-talking street smarts of the rap voice: If we had overcome, what was all this ghetto-blasting fury? Not that the words were furious: The voices were, as were the beats. And as I wanted to watch the caped man, I wanted to hear the fast and furious voices that made me dance. Run-D.M.C.'s early 12-inch singles lived on my turntable until the first album came out and I could play them all, back to back, and think about what it would be like to speak my mind to so many people like that.

With my AM radio show in college, I found out. Spinning rap discs alongside college rock one hour a week became my haven away from the happy-go-lucky torture of day-to-day dorm life. When I was at the station, I was actually back at Hempstead High School, at Johnna's Sweet Sixteen, scared to dance with a girl, but right up front when the 3 Micateers took the stage. No one listened to the show, but if they had they would have been amazed.

Then I became a publicist, a spokesperson and bio writer for all the "angry black men" on the PR company's roster. Being in the supporting cast of the recorded hip hop drama, you learn that the drama is indeed based on real life, and that some individuals are more important than other individuals. You also learn that the only way to get rappers to do anything is to let them think the idea is theirs. I felt kind of like a hooker, seducing acts into doing interviews, seducing writers into doing stories. If you're good at it, you raise it to an art form; if you're not—as I wasn't—you quit.

AND THIS IS ANOTHER PIECE OF black history: *Together Forever: Run-D.M.C., Greatest Hits 1983–1991.* We'd see the Hollis crew at the mall movieplex with ambivalent responses—here were these fellas, these professional B-boys, looking just like us, making lots of money turning our social life into a product. And they were at the movies, just like we were. The guys in Run-D.M.C. managed to be our touchable heroes, around-the-way superstars, selling us back to us with Lee-clad bravado and beat-chic minimalism.

"MY SHOES, man!" became "My Adidas!"

The guys in Run-D.M.C. were our touchable heroes, around-the-way superstars, selling us back to us with Lee-clad bravado and beat-chic minimalism.

ANASTASIA VASILAKIS

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DISSED BY ILLUSION
THE'RE SOME PEOPLE OUT
THERE
WHO DON'T EVEN CARE
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AND IN THE END, WILL STEAL
OUR COLOURS
AND PRETEND
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SPINS

REVIEWS EDITED BY JIM GREER

PLATTER DU JOUR

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That What Is Not

Virgin

Punk music seems so quaint. Listening to the Sex Pistols' *Never Mind the Bollocks, Here's the Sex Pistols* only confirms that suspicion. Great music, great lyrics, Johnny Rotten's voice sounds great—strident, wavering, a primal scream—but 1977's idea of an accelerated tempo pales in comparison to . . . well, just about anything. How could a cozy clan of irate working-class Brits with spiky hair have ever anticipated the profane fury of a Guns N' Roses or an Ice Cube?

Give Johnny Rotten (né Lydon) credit where credit is due. Public Image Ltd.'s genius-in-residence anticipated the excessive '80s to a T. "The written word is a lie" from 1986's "Rise," for example, pegged America's uncanny predilection for infotainment. And recall PiL's efforts to circumvent consumerism by embracing it: 1986's *Album*, an exercise in cultural subversion that at the time seemed the best anyone could do, considering the era's all-consuming politics of greed. To quote from Greil Marcus's book *Lipstick Traces*, "That was punk: a load of ideas sensationalized into new feelings almost instantly turned into new clichés, but set forth with such momentum that the whole blew up its equations day by day. For every fake novelty, there was a real one. For every third-hand pose, there was a fourth-hand pose that turned into a real motive." John Lydon has always positioned himself in that fourth-hand pose, even when PiL's music sounds like pissy dance fare, its aim is true.

JEFF KATZ

That What Is Not is a good rock album. But for those familiar with PiL's multifarious incarnations—apocalyptic dance band, ironic art-rock poseurs—the band's increasing reliance on conventional song structures and ordinary (albeit exceptionally tight) arrangements is disconcerting. However, the streamlining occasionally pays off. "Disappointed," from 1989's *9*, paid back double by extracting hit material from a tale of unmitigated cynicism paired with soulful backup singers. *That What Is Not*'s "Love Hope" achieves a similar effect: Lydon blurts out like some boozy lounge singer, "I want to belong!" but quickly catches himself ("Nothing comes from nothing / Now isn't that the point?"). "Acid Drops," the album's opener, samples "No future" from the Sex Pistols' "God Save the Queen." Perhaps a grown man's admission of a rash youth, of a future that came and went?

"Lucks Up" makes PiL sound like a punk band. "Emperor" dissects absolute power absolutely, sort of a Part Two to *9*'s "Warrior": "Even a speck of sand can be dangerous / In the right hand." It's John Lydon's never-ending fascination with wordplay that keeps the material fresh. And from a song's title, such as "Unfairground," to its last lyric before a guitar solo, "Dead meat hung on a rack," Lydon sometimes gets away with murder.

That What Is Not contains enough finger-wagging and browbeating to satisfy all but the most dissolute punk stalwarts. Oddly enough, it ultimately fails because it doesn't go far enough. Lydon's nattering yowl has become hackneyed, he needs to reach again for that fourth-hand pose. I was nonplussed by the first lines of the album: "What does it mean? / What does anything mean?" Who would have thought those questions still mattered? That Johnny Lydon—what a card! **Alec Foege**

The Handy Omniscient SPIN Rating System

- ● = Go directly to your local record store. Buy this album. Immediately. Kill if you must.
- ● = Whoa! Slow down, pal. This album is pretty good, but you can't buy everything in the store. Can you?
- ● = Stop it. Put that down. Go buy something to eat instead. You have to eat, too, you know.

MICHAEL JACKSON

Dangerous

Epic

Elizabeth Taylor and husband No. 8, the construction worker she met at rehab, are listening to the new Michael Jackson record, *Dangerous*. The relentless pounding reminds No. 8 of being on site—only then, he ruefully thinks to himself, he had the benefit of a hard hat and protective earphones. Elizabeth sits serene, a half smile on her face, but somewhere deep in those legendary violet eyes, there's maybe a hint of concern. She thinks to herself, "The collaboration between Michael and Teddy Riley is in no way the visionary alliance that Janet's union with Jam and Lewis absolutely was. The great thing about previous works in the Riley corpus was the way singers reacted to and fleshed out his syncopated shards. Think of Aaron Hall's unshackled melisma, Bobby Brown's vaudevillian swagger, or Keith Sweat's lubricious moans. These guys became the heart of the machine. With Michael, though, it's like he's huddled, quivering, hiding out from the onslaught of a T-1000.

"Teddy helms the first half hour of the record and it's totally stark, totally oppressive; crunching beats, teeny piping keyboards, and Michael in touch-me-not mode, sounding like he's performing under glass. We're tossed what seems like a life preserver in the form of a brace of self-produced tunes: 'Who Is It?' is close kin to 'Billie Jean,' 'Keep the Faith' attempts the same valedictorian impact of 'Man in the Mirror,' and 'Give in to Me' is a creepy attempt to come to terms with the wild man inside. Sad to say, these songs are the source of Michael's all-time worst, slobbery, mannered, wounded-fawn vocals. It's not emotional abandon that makes the listener want to insert fingers in ears and loudly la-la alongside."

Elizabeth wonders what she's going to say to Michael next time they do lunch, then glances over at No. 8 who's ploughing through the sleeve notes ("I become the stars and the moon. I become the lover and the beloved. I become the victor and the vanquished. I become the master and the slave."). She smiles and, duty done, turns the disc off. That unknowable smile's seen her through all these years.

Jonathan Bernstein

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Dancehall Reggaespañol

Columbia

On Nueva York—home of Rican rap, Haitian house, and the hit album *Salsa in English*—dancehall reggae vies with merengue and hip hop for jeep-beat supremacy. So when a bilingual Panamanian toaster named Fernando Brown, a.k.a. Nando Boom, cut an album of Spanish dancehall, it was an instant smash. His countryman El General followed suit, and by now enough Panamanian, Honduran, and Puerto Rican talent has surfaced to fill half a Latin reggae compilation, fleshed out with Jamaican material in the original patois.

Three tunes turn up in both languages, but only "Mini Mini," with its Pan-Caribbean lilt and dopey lyrics, is better in Spanish. El General's wooden "Pun Tun Tun" misses the sly snicker of little Lenny's salacious "Punnany Tegareg," while Nando Boom's thumping "El Desorden" blunts the steely edge of Cutty Ranks's "Stick It Up." Equally stiff are Puerto Rico's Lisa M and El General's cousin Rude Girl, who translates her own dumb dis of gays on "Lesbiana." But honey-throated Hondurans Victor Arzu and La Diva show real promise, crooning sleek covers of Gregory Isaacs and Audrey Hall instead of chanting. The real ragamuffin is best left to Jamaicans like Cocoa Tea and Nardo Ranks, whose "Me No Like Rikers Island" rocks the jailhouse in any language.

Larry Birnbaum

A.R. KANE

Americana

Luaka Bop/Warner Bros.

At first I decided A.R. Kane was just some R.E.M. version of electric Miles Davis, rather ridiculous even if the group was responsible for "Pump Up the Volume." (A.R. Kane probably figured it was a sellout and felt guilty about it.) Then I listened

TIM DOG AIN'T THROUGH YET.
HIS RAW MANGLING OF A SMALL CALIFORNIA CITY WAS JUST THE BEGINNING... "PENICILLIN ON WAX," HIS LONG-AWAITED ALBUM, IS A HARDCORE CURE FOR THE ILL.
DIS.
COMPTON

some more and decided, okay, the music flows in a pleasantly tropical manner, but then so does Color Me Badd's ballads, and Color Me Badd can *sing*! Then I decided I didn't *mind* A.R. Kane's singing—half-asleep, mumbly vagueness, sure, but not unpretty by any means. Then I was driving along and noticed, omigod, *hooks* (hooks even people who *like* them claim aren't there), at least in "Crack Up" and "Snow Joke." Noted how more than a couple lyrics actually refer to this Brit duo-of-color's legendary oceanicness, and determined this is rock with gills all right—the culmination of an immersion-pop quest carried through the Floaters' "Float On," the Sex Pistols' "Submission," Donna Summer's "Theme From the Deep," Implog's "Holland Tunnel Dive," Arthur Russel's "Let's Go Swimming," and those "Takin' a Dive" echoes in ELO's "Livin' Thing." Music that plummets underwater, but can *breathe* there!

Then I put the tape on at home, and the acid-rock corrosion, dub caverns, dainty falsettos, rumbly drums, and silly art-hag chatter all disintegrated into quiet dust. Problem with background drone is you gotta pay such close attention to tell the nonsongs apart—easy in my car, hard while sorting laundry. If this anthology was an EP, the weird buoyant parts would have a better chance of sinking in. I'm a real busy guy, you know.

Chuck Eddy

VARIOUS ARTISTS

The Best of Techno

Profile

How confusing. The violent "techno" sound developed by Derek May and pals in Detroit warehouses in the mid-'80s, albeit informed by certain pale strains of U.K. "technopop," was the moral equivalent of Isiah Thomas and Bill Laimbeer against the Lakers in the 1989 NBA Championship. Brits got a hold of the stuff, pretended they invented it, and did the usual mild thing: Turned it into Jean-Michel Jarre. Now I read where prole Bensonhurst teen-boys slamdance to it, but damned if I can figure out which "it" it is—the "techno" on Mute's *Paroxysm Vol. 1* comp wilts like Front 242 after a much-needed massive hemorrhage, which is what I expected from *New Beat Edit 1* (featuring two cuts by Techno 2) on Germany's ZYX label, "New Beat" being Belgium's Industrial, Jr., and all, but that *Tanzmusik* feels like some crazily songful dub-utopian grandson of PiL's *Metal Box*! My guess is the newer *Best of Techno*, with 12 club faves from Germany, Canada, U.K., and here, is more sociologically genuine. It's just not as good.

Most of its artifacts are by-now-old-hat cavalcades of synth and sample, rhythmically nifty but incomplete (some sappy strings or eurogirlie voices on top would be nice), and fast (130 BPM or so I'm told) but not *that* fast (Thelma Houston's song in *Thank God, It's Friday* was 148 BPM!) A few cheesy Italodisco-style changes, but no cheesy melodies attached. The only track to emerge from the bunch is G.T.O.'s "The Bullfrog," with nasty percussive croaks that'd make Clarence "Frogman" Henry jump. Hunt for the single.

Chuck Eddy

COWBOY JUNKIES

Black-Eyed Man

RCA

Cowboy Junkies' new album, *Black-Eyed Man*, shows the band's doubtless great appreciation for and understanding of great American blues, rock'n'roll, and country—but that ain't enough. Where their early records were bland, white middle-class takes on early Delta and urban blues, *Black-Eyed Man* focuses on country rock. While I'm sure the Junkies have great record

RESPECT.
FEATURING THE BRAND NEW STEP TO ME, BRONX NIGGA, I'LL WAX ANYBODY, AND — OF COURSE — THE CLASSIC DIS, **** COMPTON. (ALSO AVAILABLE ON HOME VIDEO).
THIS DOG IS HAVING HIS DAY, EVERYDAY.
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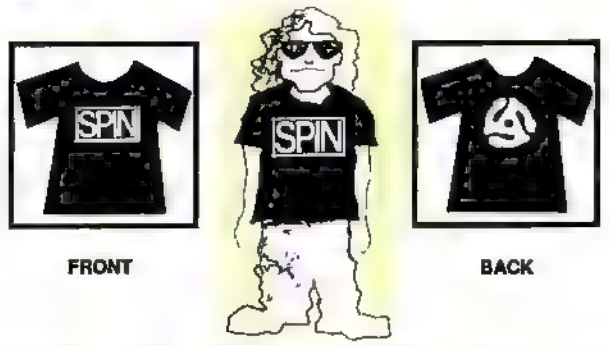

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collections, and that Gram Parsons's and Hank Williams's voices made them weep, sheer force of respect isn't enough to carry this album off. Unlike the Cramps, who have taken obvious influences and added to them, Cowboy Junkies come off as a watered-down copy of something that was unbelievably great in its original version. When *Sweetheart of the Rodeo* by the Byrds, Richard and Linda Thompson's duo albums, and most of Gram Parsons's recorded output are readily available on CD, there's no real use for this record.

Black-Eyed Man is sort of okay, I don't really mind listening to it, but it's instantly forgettable in a genre that has created amazing, emotional stuff that makes day-to-day life easier to deal with. The marriage between country and western and rock'n'roll can still be done right—take American Music Club—but listening to *Black-Eyed Man* only underscores the fact that life is too short for the average. It takes the same time to listen to a great record as an average or bad one.

Johan Kugelberg

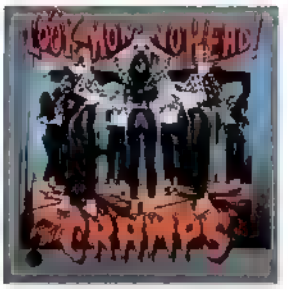
THE CRAMPS

Look Mom, No Head!

Restless

The new Cramps album is more than anything else like receiving a letter from an old friend: Maybe a little uninspired, perhaps a trifle too distant from what your reminiscences tell you, but on the whole like a remembrance of the greatness of things and times past.

The lineup changes—replacing Nick Knox with original Weirdos drummer Nickey Alexander and adding Slim Chance from the Panther Burns-Mad Daddys contingent on bass—have resulted in, gasp, a more contemporary-sounding rhythm section than on any previous Cramps disc. Poison Ivy Rorschach's guitar playing has evolved into a personal and happening mix of Duane Eddy's twang and Link Wray's crunch, and Lux's vocals are as possessed and Thunderbird-soaked as ever. The songs on the album are written within a rockabilly formula; it's amazing that so much can be done with such a limited number of chord changes. Crazed rockabilly performer Hasil Adkins is a better guitar player than Eric "Crapton" in the Cramps' universe, and that is fine and dandy by me. The obligatory obscure cover versions on the album run from the inspired take on the Sparkles' "Hipsville 29 B.C. (I Need Help)" to a sort of unnecessary version of the Jack Nitzsche–penned Captain Beefheart tune "Hard Workin' Man" from the *Blue Collar* soundtrack.



Look Mom, No Head! is nowhere near the masterpiece *Songs the Lord Taught Us* was, but considering that the band has been around for 15 years another masterpiece should not be expected from them. Heck, the Stones started sucking after ten years, the Who after five, and if you look at what both the English and the American class of 1977 punk rock are up to these days, I'd say the Cramps are aging with dignity. This album is certainly worthy of your dollars, but sniff out the Cramps early records first, maybe along with a pile of crazy '50s stuff (the *Sin Alley* and *Desperate Rock & Roll* compilations are a good place to start) and you might never switch on MTV again.

Johan Kugelberg

THE CHURCH

Priest = Aura

Arista

A contrast of note: Although R.E.M. and the Church both started out as willfully obscure Byrds offspring a decade or so ago, Michael Stipe and crew keep expanding their vision, while Steve Kilbey's boys cling to the old-fashioned ways. *Priest = Aura* finds these somber Aussies conjuring up that haunting 3:00 A.M. vibe yet again, with Kilbey's weary vocals and waves of shimmering guitar creating the magic. "Aura," "Mistress," "Old Flame," et al., epito-

WORLD BEAT

Madagascar

BY RICHARD GEHR

The children dance while the old people get dizzy.... Money is like a guest: It comes today and leaves tomorrow.... Don't stir the rice in another man's pot.

—local Madagascar proverbs

ANCESTOR WORSHIP, REBURIALS, bleedings, circumcisions, and proverbs, proverbs, proverbs make the island of Madagascar one of the world's richest repositories of archaic culture. Ironically, however, Madagascar is becoming better known for what it has lost. One of the world's great environmental disasters, more than 85 percent of its forests have been torched in recent years to provide grazing ground for cattle, leaving dusty savannas and windswept plains where ghostly lemurs and other species of plant and animal life unique to the world's fourth largest island once flourished.

Slightly smaller in area than California, Oregon, and Washington combined, Madagascar has been virtually isolated from the world's economy since the 1972 revolution. You won't find Madonna T-shirts, Coke, or McDonald's here—the recording industry is virtually nonexistent—but it still nourishes an amazingly rich and diverse musical environment. Some 150 hardy Hira Gasy troupes roam the island, competing with one another at ceremonies combining music, dance, theater, and acrobatics. Rural virtuosos of makeshift bamboo zithers (*valiha*), flutes (*sodina*), lutes, guitars, and drums interpret an immense and vital indigenous repertory recombining sounds picked up long ago from the Middle East, Africa, Portugal, and Britain. The best introduction would be a pair of two-volume compilations titled *Madagaskar* (Feuer und Eis import) and *Madagasikara* (GlobeStyle import). *Rakotofra—Flute Master of Madagaskar* and *Rakotozafy—Valiha MalazaiFamous Valiha* (GlobeStyle) are also highly recommended.

Madagascar's musical universe recombines sounds from the Middle East, Africa, Portugal, and Britain.

Peter Gabriel's Real World label has also gotten bandwagonesque with *Island of Ghosts* by Rossy. Recorded in the capital city of Antananarivo, then beefed up at Bath with that familiar Real World reverb. Rossy (real name Paul-Bert Rahasimanana) is the most visible young Malagasy musician, a working-class hero who has done an excellent job of electrifying many of the island's styles and rhythms. *Island of Ghosts*, the soundtrack to a recent documentary, offers a relatively high-tech tour through unusual musical territory that includes Zulu-like choral music, the intricate stop-time songs called *salegy*, luscious instrumentals, the percussive "music of the breath" known as *kagnaky*, and even a few lemurs. While the ubiquitous tickita-tickita-tickita rhythm that bolsters most Malagasy music is downplayed, it's an immensely listenable effort nonetheless.

Guitarist Henry Kaiser returned recently from a Madagascar recording expedition, where the single album he and slide guitarist David Lindley hoped to record with local musicians expanded into a five-CD extravaganza that Shanachie plans to release this spring. As appalled by the island's problems as he was impressed by its musicians, Kaiser says that "Madagascar is facing problems many of us will be confronting 20 years from now if things don't change." But as they say in Madagascar, *It is only when we sleep that we resemble the rich.*

Steely Dan

BY IAN KREILKAMP

STEELY DAN DOESN'T CONFORM to any right-thinking post-1977 doctrine of rock music. Glistening with the cold sheen of studio wizardry, filled with tasty licks and ultraprofessional chops, the band's music lacks the sloppiness and passion that any respectable rock band aspires to. After a brief, half-hearted career on the road, Steely Dan stopped touring and simply recorded albums with session musicians in L.A.

All the same, Steely Dan was one of the great rock bands of the 1970s, representing the apotheosis of the slick musical values of the time as well as their critique. The band's records chart the trajectory of the descent of American idealism into a smarmy decade where the countdown to ecstasy hit zero and just kept going. Perhaps if they had come of age ten years later, punk rock's reevaluation of all pop music values would have tempted Walter Becker and Donald Fagen out from behind the walls of their technology, but in the early '70s—inhabiting a world of hippie lifestyle, Zen narcissism, and instant pleasures—they refined an obsessive studio craftsmanship and sold millions of some of the most bitter and ironic pop records ever.

Steely Dan speaks to us from "that cold and windy day" when the trappings of hipness and sexiness fall away to reveal a lonely figure waiting for a fix. "Will you still have a song to sing when the razor boy comes and takes your fancy things away?" Fagen asks a generation stupefied by nostalgia and self-involvement, his voice concealing all the rancor of Bob Dylan on "Positively 4th Street." You might not even notice the bitterness of "Razor Boy" as you hum along, making the song the subtlest of attacks on complacency and materialism. Presumably that funky vibraphone would be one of the "fancy things" to be taken away, an irony that didn't trouble the band and that its groovy fans didn't notice.

The just-rereleased *Gold*—with a useless live recording of "Bodhisattva" and two Donald Fagen solo songs tacked on—is not the band's greatest hits, which is just as well, since Steely Dan's albums were better than its singles. *Countdown to Ecstasy* (1973), *Pretzel Logic* (1974), and *Katy Lied* (1975) are where to go for a musical journey into the drugged, dishonest American soul. Steely Dan's travels through several regions of hell are motivated by a belief in something out there worth the trip: The band leaves us in a world stripped of illusion, but not without hope. "All night long as we would sing that stupid song / And every word we sang I knew was true," from "Dr. Wu," stands as Steely Dan's loving tribute to the pop music that occasionally makes the world bearable.

Steely Dan: the most bitter and ironic pop records ever created.

mize elegant despair, though drawing a specific meaning from the mutterings can be like trying to grab smoke rings.

On the other hand, there's no ambiguity when he sighs, "I feel anxiety in my neck." While the lads often slip into their own private haze, a heap o' hostility lies a-festering beneath the passive exterior. "Lustre" condemns your standard evil woman; "The Disillusionist" sneers at a man who's "famous from the waist down." The clash of childish ill will and sophisticated dreamscapes generates some unexpected tension, but not enough. You can only cast a spell so many times before it goes flat.

Jon Young

SHELLEYAN ORPHAN

Hum Root

Columbia

I know, because I've been told, that the people in Shelleyan Orphan are as swell as they come, so it kind of pains me that this record is so godawful. Mostly-lead-singer Caroline Crawley has an undeniably pretty voice, and I'm the last guy to put down girls with pretty voices, but the music that accompanies her is insufferably precious and mires the songs in a swamp of treacle. Other-important-guy Jimbo or Jimbore or Leopold or whatever his name is (no, really, it's Jemaur Tayle) sounds kind of like Leonard Nimoy doing Anthony Newley (not as good as Bowie's version) and should stick to looking abstracted in publicity photos.

Do the words "cascades of lilting guitars" appeal to you, and if so, have you had your blood-sugar level checked lately? The Orphan's music is so relentlessly delicate it makes me nostalgic for Cat Stevens's—you know, *harder* stuff. *Hum Root* will probably hit big in the closed circle of Cocteau Twins fans and people who think Chapterhouse is a punk rock band, but I'm not sure who else will be drawn to it. Those who are could probably use a big shot of Vitamin B-12 in their collective rump.

Jim Greer

POI DOG PONDERING

Volo Volo

Columbia

Poi Dog Pondering is a 395-or-so-member Austin-based band from Hawaii with some lofty musical aims. In its native land, *poi* is a sticky food item with the consistency of wallpaper that I was terrorized with once as a small child, so maybe I tend to react negatively to anything with that word in it, but I doubt it. I think instead that Poi Dog Pondering's music is just too smooth and predictable, with its formulaic ramblings and precious lyrical content. The feeling throughout the whole disc is that the band is determined to make Art.

This stuff sounds like some new-age jazz hybrid, schizophrenic time signatures, hectic instrumental breaks, and full pseudosoul choruses. It gets tired real fast. Sometimes *Volo Volo* borders on Roxy Music wannabe-isms like "Be the One," or world-music moshing like "Ta Bouche Est Tabou," but mostly this is kinda like a "Don't Worry Be Happy" stew that's so dull you'll be jonesin' for some raw flesh to bite into. Be very worried, because bland is bad.

Lauren Spencer

POI DOG PHOTO GWENDOLEN CATES

THE VERLAINES

Ready to Fly

Slash/Warner Bros.

The Verlaines' majordomo Graeme Downes has a Ph.D. in music, but luckily for you he still can't count to Top 40. His band, one in a long line of New Zealand pop miracles, has for the past ten or so years

"sporadically released" (in the sense that a beggar will "sporadically eat") four albums on New Zealand's fabled Flying Nun label, available in America through Homestead Records. All—especially 1988's *Bird-Dog*—are recommended.

So it's a bummer that the band's major-label debut, more or less hard on the heels of fellow N.Z. wunderkinder The Chills' first Slash offering (well, okay, a year later), is not quite up to snuff. Blame it partly on the production, which, while less heinous than Gary Smith's Chills gloss, smooths out edges that could have snagged your interest. But blame it mostly on the less-than-snappy songwriting this time around. Downes has always gone in for an unstudied eclecticism—meaning that he usually has too many good ideas to cram into a strictly pop formula—but this time out the ideas seem lackluster and repetitive, buried under the layers of clickety-clack guitars, rather than buoyed up by them.

Which is not to say that *Ready to Fly* is a lousy album, and anyway Downes's track record has earned him the right to an occasional muff. Next time, huh, guys?

Jim Greer

CHRIS STAMEY

Fireworks

RNA

Chris Stamey is one of those people you know you're supposed to like but you probably don't, and if you do, you still probably don't bother listening to his records. Half of the songwriting team (along with unofficial fifth R.E.M.-er Peter Holsapple) behind the legendary should've-but-never-really-clicked dB's, Stamey is a master crafter of pop tunes, and here along with guests such as Holsapple, Mitch Easter, and (big surprise) Peter Buck he finely stitches together another beautiful bunch of precious gems. The problem is Stamey's songs are often *too* precious. Like the photo on the inside sleeve of Stamey sipping cappuccino in his little pinstriped coat, there's an air of pretension and discomfort in the restrained precision here. And whereas some-

one like Michael Stipe throws non sequitur curve balls in his love songs to make you think he's saying something mysteriously deep, Stamey gets right to the mushy point until you'll just plain blush if you play them too loud around anyone cool. Many are almost as straightforward lovey-dovey as the letters I write to my beautiful girlfriend (and you sure wouldn't want to see any of those).

It remains that the best work by any former dB is the loose and poorly recorded 1985 throwaway *Sidekick Phenomenon* by drummer Will Rigby. The cool thing about the dB's was that they were fun. I can't remember why right now, but they were. C'mon Stameroony, we're still with you! Flush the cappuccino, kick back, have a shot of tequila, crank up the amps, and lighten up.

Mark Blackwell

LUKA BLOOM

The Acoustic Motorbike

Reprise

Having earned his reputation as a tenacious solo performer live, Luka Bloom first wowed U.S. audiences with a lilting brogue and a manic folk strum opening for the Pogues and Sinéad O'Connor. And while his songs have often been strong enough, theoretically, to withstand all sorts of arrangements, Bloom has been pegged a neotraditionalist. His electro-acoustic guitar has become his nemesis—a pain in his Erse arse.

Riverside, 1990's debut, highlighted Bloom's knack for pinpointing a glorious sort of melancholia in three or four minutes. *The Acoustic Motorbike* reneges on Bloom's commitment to crisp, breathless pop epiphanies. "I Need Love" is an arresting easy-listening rap song that stopped an audience cold when I saw Bloom perform it during a club date last year. On disc it's lost its edge, even with a backing band, but still indicates a direction Bloom would do well to follow. Baldly romantic songs such as "Exploring the Blue" and "This Is Your Country" and a maudlin cover of "(I Can't Help) Falling in Love With You" only repave a road already taken. The title cut, "The Acoustic Motorbike," is an environmental-age "Magic Bus," a one-chord novelty tune that at this point is Bloom's best chance for cult success.

Alec Foege

VARIOUS ARTISTS

New York Eye and Ear Control

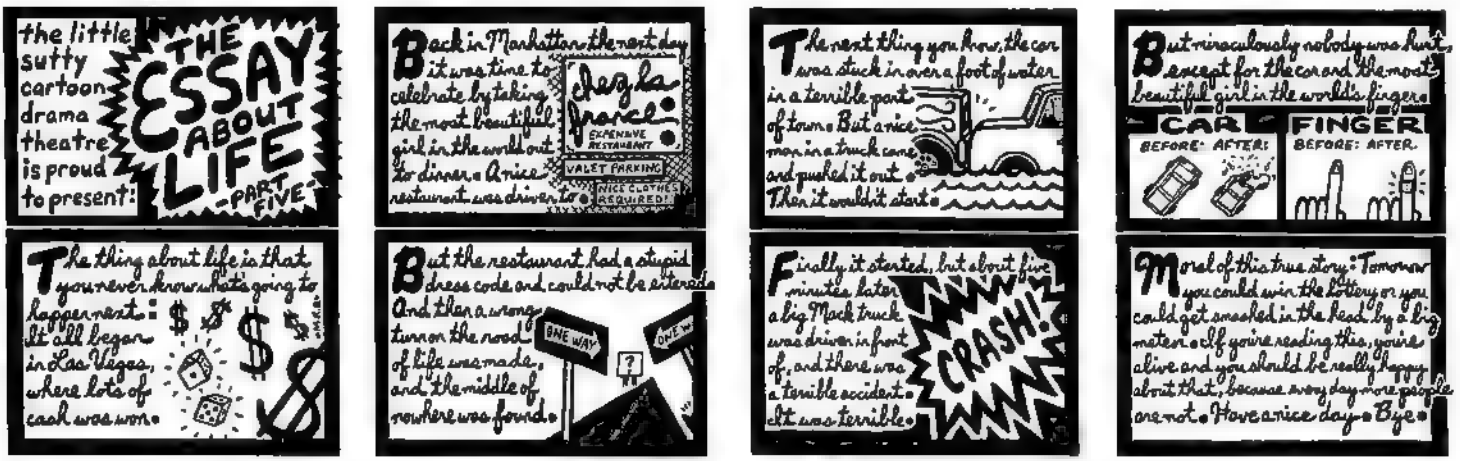
Matador

Television and Sonic Youth were never all that great in the first place, so if a bunch of bored New York young people wanna fool themselves into believing they've got a Relevant Underground Rock Scene in 1991, it's not like there's no precedent. Gotham kids are settling for some awfully uneventful chaos these days. This has the same relationship to *Peripheral Vision* that said '82 comp had to 1978's deathless *No New York*.

Once you get past the free-jazz nostalgia (Borbetomagus), sexless swamp lurch (Railroad Jerk), chamber-Nautilus prog drone (Dustdevils), and tough-guy constipation (Cop Shoot Cop, a big disappointment), you're left with OWT's harmolodic harp, Circle X's autobahn hypnosis, and Unsane's virtuoso punk—not bad, but only the static-y mumbles in Fitch's "Since I Quit My Job" earn a spot on my C-90.

Chuck Eddy

Little Sutty's Quest for Music *by Mark Blackwell*


the little sutty cartoon drama theatre is proud to present:
THE ESSAY ABOUT LIFE
-PART FIVE-
Back in Manhattan the next day it was time to celebrate by taking the most beautiful girl in the world out to dinner. A nice restaurant was driven to.
Degha Grove
EXPENSIVE RESTAURANT
VALET PARKING
NICE CLOTHES REQUIRED!
The next thing you knew, the car was stuck in over a foot of water in a terrible part of town. But a nice man in a truck came and pulled it out. Then it wouldn't start.
But miraculously nobody was hurt, except for the car and the most beautiful girl in the world's fingers.
CAR
BEFORE: AFTER:
FINGER
BEFORE: AFTER:
The thing about life is that you never know what's going to happen next. It all began in Las Vegas, where lots of cash was won.
But the restaurant had a stupid dress code and could not be entered. And then a wrong turn on the road of life was made, and the middle of nowhere was found.
ONE WAY
Finally it started, but about five minutes later a big Mack truck was driven in front of, and there was a terrible accident. It was terrible.
CRASH!
Moral of this true story: Tomorrow you could win the lottery or you could get smacked in the head by a big meteor. If you're reading this, you're alive and you should be really happy about that, because every day more people are not. Have a nice day. Bye.

STOLAR TRACKS

Dwarves *Thank Heaven for Little Girls* (Sub Pop)
On the face of it, San Francisco's Dwarves will disgust you, repulse you and probably have you choking local record store help for a refund. But if your stomach can take you past the first listen, you'll be witness to 11 songs of immensely tight, fast and powerful punk rock. The Dwarves are the last of a dying breed. Hear them now and forever hold your stomach.

Pigface *Welcome to Mexico . . .* (Invisible)
Chicago's Pigface (a.k.a. members of Ministry, Revolting Cocks, Killing Joke, Nine Inch Nails, Skinny Puppy) goes on tour in mid-'91 and records 14 songs of industrial heaven that live and out of the studio are rawer and tighter than the straightest up rock band, minus the useless lyrics. If you missed Pigface's debut album, *Gub*, earlier this year, this release will get you started.

The Cramps *Look Mom No Head!* (Restless)
There isn't much new to say about rockabilly-punk ancients the Cramps except that yes, the band is still around, and yes, its music is still devilishly hard and satisfying. *On Mom*, the band doesn't stray too far from its brand of "old school" frenzied, customized rock'n'roll, which is just fine considering how many people Lux Interior and crew have left drooling and happy over the years.

Reverend Horton Heat *Smoke 'Em If You Got 'Em* (Sub Pop)
Looking to the future, there's a punk-rock seminary somewhere in the rural depths of Texas putting out some of the country's best new rockabilly guitar players, and Horton Heat (a.k.a. Jim Heath) is 1991's class valedictorian. On the band's Sub Pop debut, its brand of honest, clean and down-right fun gets you rockin' and smiling with 40 plus minutes of unpretentious, good ol' boy Texan style rock. Buy this and a shot and you're all set.

Melvins *Eggnog* (Boner)
Help! You're listening to the Melvins and you can't get up! This San Francisco trio has you trapped, albeit somewhat willingly, in musical quicksand with its new four-song EP. Slow-moving like a slug on a glue trap, thick and rich like mashed potatoes on mud cake, and vocally intense like a Harpy in a hot spell, Melvins are unpredictable and unpretentious and you've gotta love them.

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NEW REVOLUTIONS

New Noise

BY DANIEL FIDLER AND NANCY LEOPARDI

SICK AND TIRED OF READING ABOUT **Teenage Fanclub** in SPIN? Well, too bad. You'll be hearing much more about the band, and not only from us. Dutch East India Trading is cashing in on Fanclub's critical success with a Peel Sessions EP of four previously released tracks. Yet another chance to hear the newest, coolest, cushiest guitar rock around. For those of you already familiar with the band's sonic excellence, you'll want this live-in-the-studio disc to add to your collection of Fanclub hits.

Remember those dark days of burning candles and incense, your favorite doom rock band droning on the stereo? Oh, sweet miserableness—depression was never so pleasurable. Then all your dark heroes either killed themselves or cheered up, leaving you lost in lonely nostalgia. But New Zealand's **Cake Kitchen** (Homestead) promises a renewal of gloom. The band's new LP, *World of Sand*, is thick with acoustic and electric guitars, while singer-guitarist Graeme Jefferies's crooning lyrics, a strange cross between Ian Curtis and Wall-era Roger Waters, wash over and envelop your body. But where old-school doom rock was often pathetically self-absorbed, Cake Kitchen's message is less mopy, more sophisticated, and closer to home.

Baltimore's **Lungfish** is the giving, selfless man/woman you've wanted to meet all your life but were never lucky enough to find. Dischord recently picked the band up and is releasing its new LP, at press time untitled. The passionate angst and anger on the album is nothing but honest, pure, and soulful, prompting you to spit in the face of poster-boy major-label acts that can't or won't do the same.

Wales's **Pooh Sticks** are and are not to be taken seriously. While the band is well known for its devilishly cynical approach—poking fun at and mimicking pop music—it delivers the goods in an extremely enjoyable and competent pop-rock fashion. The band's recent seven-inch, "Young People"/"Crazy Love" (Sweet Virginia/Sympathy for the Record Industry) is full of bubble gum tunes and sarcastic, meaningless idiot pop lyrics which at first make you sick, then quickly leave you laughing. The Pooh Sticks' last LP, *Great White Wonder*, was voted SPIN's No. 1 Album of 1991 You Didn't Hear. Don't miss the Pooh Sticks again.

And the music critics quoth: "On the seventh day, God created Dinosaur Jr.'s J. Mascis and bestowed unto him a voice that every rock singer in the world wanted to copy." Get real. Mascis's voice is distinctive—distinctively annoying. And why would anyone want to sound annoying? Especially Cincinnati's **Afghan Whigs**, whose new LP, *Congregation* (Sub Pop) is a clean move toward musical excellence, despite any superficial Dino similarities. The 12-song LP shows the band bursting its Sub Pop chains with catchy, heavy guitar riffs, downright lovable song arrangements, melodies that jerk your emotions back and forth, and yes, endearing, raspy vocals that wail, moan, scream, and shout—strangely reminiscent of a young Paul Westerberg in heat. Sub Pop's next time bomb is about to explode. Take cover.

Afghan Whigs, *from left*: Rick McCollum, Greg Dulli, Steve Earle, John Curley.

What Madonna is to the mainstream, singer-performance artist **Lydia Lunch** is to the underground. Tough, loud, and crude, constantly reinventing her sound so you never get sick of her. On Lunch's new LP, *Shotgun Wedding* (Triple X), the queen of shrill, confrontational vocals has taken to singing instead of shrieking, her voice strangely soft, hypnotic, and confident. Anyone put off by Lunch's overwhelming presence in the past will be pleasantly surprised by this toned-down effort. And she can really sing, too.

Dutch East India Trading and Homestead Records, (516) 764-6200; Dischord Records, 3819 Beecher Street St. NW, Washington, D.C. 20007 (include a stamp); Sympathy for the Record Industry, (213) 423-0281; Sub Pop Records, (206) 441-8441, Triple X Records, (213) 221-2204.

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Soundgarden

continued from page 45

Thayil: It's fun to play. It's loud.
SPIN: Is there some particular brand of ennui that only white suburban males experience that is essential for the creation of metal/hardcore/grunge? Would the focus of white rock'n'roll be "We're bored and want to have a fucking good time"?
Thayil: (*With mounting vehemence*) Why do you think it has anything to do with boredom? Only indie bands have the lives with rich mommies and daddies who are in the military, just fucking bored. Go ahead, sit the fuck around and live off your Brown University tuition or whatever. And write songs, and try to be really dumb and working class. Yeah, you can survive on an indie label 'cause you know where your money is coming from. Your dad will always give you a job at the firm when you come back home. . . . (*Sardonic*) Lest anyone believe an indie band is comprised of prostitutes and junkies.
SPIN: I could name a few like that. But I think there is real angst and anger that comes from the suburbs now that the American dream has gone completely sour for so many people.
Thayil: (*Very sarcastic*) I don't have any angst or anger, do I?
SPIN: You tell me.
Thayil: No, I'm not angry. What do bored kids do when they don't play rock'n'roll? They torture cats, they do burglaries.
SPIN: If you weren't in a band, what crime would you be serving time for now?
Thayil: (*Dismissive*) I wouldn't be serving time for any crime. But I probably wouldn't be bored.

The interview was over, as was my career as a pseudo-gonzo rock journalist. I slapped my official promotional Soundgarden bumper sticker onto the import, then headed home, where I lit my official promotional Soundgarden "Jesus Christ Pose" candle with my official promotional Soundgarden key chain–lighter.

SPIN: Do you have many women in your audience?
Cornell: We've had women stage-divers; they're pretty dainty about it. We get different kinds of females at our shows. There's the fifteen-year-olds who try to dress like prostitutes. Not a lot. Then the Sub Pop–looking girls, who have flannel shirts and baby dreadlocks. There doesn't seem to be any type of person predominately male or female that makes up the majority of our audience.
SPIN: Do you like L7? Babes in Toyland?
Thayil: I like L7. I like the Hole record, too. How come you asked? Is that a nice way of saying, "Do you think women can rock"?
SPIN: I only ask it because it's an obviously male-dominated subculture.
Thayil: As it should be. Fuck, there's plenty of waitress positions open.
SPIN: And what would your order be?
Thayil: (*Petulant*) I was just joking.

(Well, I guess I had better leave the cheap pop theorizing to Joe Carducci [author of *Rock and the Pop Narcotic*]. Time was running out and patience wearing thin. There seemed to be only one option left.)

SPIN: How do you make a blonde's eyes twinkle?
Thayil: Who cares?
SPIN: Shine a flashlight in her ear.

(Laughter and hilarity hemorrhages from the table like David Cronenberg's last celluloid ejaculation. Eureka! I've hit paydirt!)

Thayil: (*Lighting up like the Fourth of July*) How many feminists does it take to screw in a light bulb?
SPIN: How many?
Thayil: (*Imitating an angry feminist*) That's not funny!

(More hearty chuckling from all concerned. Even the stoic Ben cracks a smile—what is it about these strong, silent bass players?)

Thayil: (*Gathering steam*) What's the first thing a blonde does when she wakes up? . . . Goes home.
SPIN: (*With budding excitement*) Shit, I can only remember the punch line. . . . I'll go backward.

Antihero

continued from page 55

was given the full Top 40 treatment and a "making of" program ran nationally on Fox.

New organizations ran promo after promo, pimping off the war's popularity. *Time* and *Newsweek* pumped out souvenir editions; the line between news, entertainment, and merchandising began to disappear. In New York City, a daily newspaper helped pay for the "victory parade." (A local TV reporter was actually arrested when he tried to interview antiwar activists chanting on the sidelines.)

ABC tried to cash in one last time with a prime-time movie of the week salute to "the heroes of Desert Storm," complete with President Bush as the MC. Footage of the real events and dramatized material were intermixed. In a sense, this lack of distinction between fantasy and reality was consistent with the way network news treated the war. Only Karl Marx's dictum proved prophetic this time; history repeated itself as farce. The show was, to use a military metaphor, a total bomb.

THE REAGAN AND BUSH ADMINISTRATIONS KNEW something that Franklin Roosevelt understood well: Americans get mad at bad guys, not bad ideologies. Find a Hitler, or invent one, and you have the battle half won. So Qaddafi begat Noriega and Noriega begat Hussein. Demonization was rediscovered as a key tool of psychological mobilization. And to complete the circle, in this sales scenario, George "Wimp" Bush played Rambo, while the Pentagon produced a celebrity, too: Norman Schwarzkopf. With his outsize IQ and even more outsize torso, since slimmed down for his *Vanity Fair* portrait, Schwarzkopf was their antihero.

You'll recall how CNN's Peter Arnett became a target of right-wing criticism for his Baghdad reporting despite the network's constant efforts to point out that Arnett's stories were often being censored. Friends at CNN tell me that the network was very concerned about the well-orchestrated anti-Arnett campaign and were careful to insure that his reporting was surrounded by disclaimers and quickly followed by interviews with experts who treated Arnett as an advocate, not a journalist.

How CNN Fought the War, a new book by CNN's general-in-residence, retired major general Perry M. Smith, recounts his battle to keep the Pentagon position the dominant one, while operating inside CNN's Atlanta newsroom, a place that insiders often consider a news bunker. Smith explains how he waged his own war within the war to "balance" Arnett's "misleading" coverage. "Throughout this entire period of time," he writes, "I kept trying to figure out Peter Arnett. . . . The more I watched the Arnett coverage and the more I talked to people who knew him well, the more I came to believe that he was a 'feeler.' In other words, Arnett is someone who empathizes with the people around him." Feeling and empathy are apparently considered a high crime and misdemeanor in some circles. Clearly

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. . . "She opens the car door."
Thayil: (*Completes joke with fever-pitched climax*) How can you tell when a blonde is done having sex?

SPIN: (*Basking in the afterglow*) So you were up for a Grammy. Did you attend the ceremony?
Cornell: (*Perking up*) That's the famous ceremony where Milli Vanilli won Best New Artist [in 1989]. We saw them "perform."
Matt Cameron: (*You remember him—the drummer.*) I don't know why anyone was surprised that Milli Vanilli didn't really sing.
Cornell: Music like that shouldn't pretend to have integrity.
Cameron: The line has gotten really close to the movie *This Is Spinal Tap*.
Cornell: The process Spinal Tap went through to write *Smell the Glove* is really no different than when bands write albums now.
SPIN: Chris, how do you feel being labeled a sex symbol?
Cornell: (*Unconvincingly*) It doesn't matter, because I'm not. There might, like, be a minority, but that's not what the majority of people feel. It's not a popular consensus.

(Guess again.)

SPIN: What was the last song you heard that you wished you had written?
Cameron: "On a Plain" by Nirvana.
Cornell: I haven't heard that one.
Cameron: It has a chord in it that I used in the last song I wrote and I just figured, "Fuck, why didn't I think of that?"

(Oh, he's so cute and nice. I wish the rest of them would disappear and I could just finish up this interview alone with Matt Cameron and a spunky little Zinfadel. Not only is he the only band member to make an appearance in my dreams—yeah, one of *those*—but he also once played in a Kiss cover band, complete with full makeup.)

SPIN: (*Back from her daydream*) Is there a dilemma posed in opening for a band like Guns N' Roses? Did you see Sonic Youth open for Neil Young?
Cornell: We probably would have had the same problems as Sonic Youth on the Neil Young show, except that I think we are a little bit more versatile musically.
SPIN: Boy, did they piss off the Neil Young audience. I've never heard anything like the roar of disapproval that came after their set. I think it was fantastic. I heard that in Princeton Kim couldn't wear her flag pants 'cause the school thought they were offensive.
Cornell: The twists of the righteous flag defense has always amazed me. I think it's a symptom of the economy and everybody is getting scared and wants to feel secure in that conservatism. I just don't think the heavy-duty right-wing thing is gonna last. At some point chaos seems attractive to people.
SPIN: I don't know if this is a touchy subject, but Chris, in light of your friend Andrew Wood's death, do you feel a responsibility to your audience to deglamorize heroin use?
Cornell: No, I don't feel a responsibility to my audience for any reason, whether it be about his death or about anything. I think that musicians', artists', or even writers' only responsibility really is true expression.
SPIN: Has there been a moment recently where you felt such blissed-out happiness that if God struck you dead at that moment, you knew you would die happy?
Cornell: (*With a sly smile*) No.
SPIN: How do you feel about being on a major label now? Has anyone ever accused you of the proverbial selling out?
Cornell: A long time ago.
Thayil: People say that.
Cornell: There were a lot of indie bands that would say things behind our back, and now it seems like almost every one is signed to a major label. We didn't sign for about a year or two so we could decide what we wanted. We got lucky with the Seattle situation because we were off Sub Pop about the time when the big buzz was happening. The only ones that are negatively affected are the ones who jumped on the bandwagon. Like if you took Pearl Jam, Soundgarden, Nirvana, and Mudhoney—all the new releases—and put them all on one disc and you didn't know where they were from, you wouldn't assume that they were from the same scene or the same city.
Cameron: Is this your first interview?
SPIN: No, but it's probably my last.

THE INTERVIEW WAS OVER, AS WAS MY CAREER AS a pseudo-gonzo rock journalist. I slapped my official promotional Soundgarden bumper sticker onto the import, then headed home, where I lit my official promotional Soundgarden "Jesus Christ Pose" candle with my official promotional Soundgarden key chain–lighter, shaped like the spark plug on the official promotional Soundgarden logo, still wondering what in the hell it all meant?

Thinking about Soundgarden, I wished I could have liked them more. Then, I wished I could have hated them more. But most of all, I wished something would come along and cut through all this infernal indifference.

his feelings were out of line with the official word.

There is another factor that brought the networks into line with government policy. January 1991 was not the best time for the networks to confront a popular President and his popular war. And the reasons were economic. A lot of smart network money was engaged in a massive lobbying effort to change the FCC's financial syndication rules.

Those rules limited the networks' rights to own and market their own programming, ostensibly to limit their power to monopolize the marketplace. This meant that program suppliers, not the networks, would make the big money when *The Cosby Show* and other profitable shows went into syndication. Needless to say, this arrangement pleased the producers, but not the programmers. As television became more competitive, thanks to cable and VCRs, network profits began to plunge.

The Federal Communications Commission had the power to revise the rules, and it was dominated by a group of Reagan-Bush FCC appointees. One of the commissioners, James Quello, a former station manager of Detroit's ABC affiliate, was the network point man on the issue. Just before the war started, he made a very public point of criticizing aggressive questioning at Pentagon press briefings, labeling it as unpatriotic in a speech to the Oklahoma Broadcasters Association. What kind of signal do you think that sent to network higher-ups? What network big would want to antagonize the very administration it was then asking for a major financial dispensation.

A friend at one of television's top shows—a veteran producer who insists that his anonymity be protected—told me he proposed that broader debates be built into his network's Gulf War coverage. His executive producer agreed and invited him to draft a proposal.

He never received a response. When he complained months later, he was told that that the nonresponse was his response. "Don't you know what was going on?" he was asked. He said he felt totally naive to learn that throughout this period, one of the key network executives, a prominent "fixer," was in the White House regularly, lobbying on the FCC rule change.

It was in this same period that Michael Gartner, president of NBC's news division, personally intervened to kill a story about civilian damage in Iraq, shot and produced by the network's longtime stringer Jon Alpert, one of the few independent journalists to regularly report for a network news program. Alpert was fired after 12 years. The circumstances were these: Thanks to an invitation from former attorney general Ramsey Clark, Alpert wangled a visa into Iraq at a time when NBC News could not get one for its own principal correspondent. Tom Brokaw's *Nightly News* program agreed to run his report but Gartner intervened, later telling Clark that he was considered a "loose cannon" and didn't want one of his people associating with the "Ramsey Clarks of the world."

Gartner says he never saw Alpert's piece so he was not censoring that specific story—and that network belt-tightening meant that free-lancers were no longer needed. But among journalists who examined the case there is no question that it was the content of Alpert's report—with its striking images of civilians in hospitals and people weeping over their dead—that doomed the report.

Slowly, as hard information snuck out from under the blanket of state censorship and news management, media organizations began to admit they had been had. Fifteen of the biggest media organizations wrote to Dick Cheney months after the war ended to protest the pool systems that the networks had helped create. Today, the Pentagon is negotiating with a committee of Washington bureau chiefs to rewrite the rules, not abolish them.

So as we celebrate the anniversary of Desert Storm, and await Schwarzkopf's five-million-dollar memoirs, many of our most thoughtful journalists know in their heart of hearts that truth was a major casualty of the Gulf War, and that there is nothing to prevent a rerun.

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BACK PAGE

THE ROCK BOTTOM AWARDS

Just what the music world needs—more awards. At least ours are mean-spirited.

All-Round Original Talent, Visionary, and Nice Guy Award to Lenny Kravitz—Not!

Never to Be Seen Again in SPIN Annoying Catchphrase Award: "Not!"

Cry Wolf Award to Tin Machine for the "controversial" sleeve of its *Tin Machine II* album. (Tin Machine also picks up the **Truth in Advertising Award** for that same sleeve: Four dicks on the outside, four dicks on the inside.

Richard Simmons Deal-a-Meal Award to Paula Abdul for following her beefy MTV Awards performance with some slimming camera work on her "Blowing Kisses in the Wind" video.

Playing Hard to Get Award to Fugazi for giving SPIN the royal runaround, then posing for every "alternative" rag that would have it.

Industrial Music Award to C+C Music Factory. Relentless.

Yellow Rose Award to Axl Rose for offering to fight Bob Guccione, Jr., then chickening out when Bob took him up on the offer. (Rose was also nominated in the **Services to Photography** category.)

Emperor's New Clothes Award to Prince for his cheeky appearance on *The MTV Awards*.

So Glad We Waited Award to U2 for the muddled, befuddled *Meisterwerk* that is *Achtung Baby*.

Smells Like Teen Spirit Award to Neil Young for *Arc*, his 34-minute feedback elegy to lost (Sonic) youth.

White Riot Award to Morrissey for his ill-fated show, at which 35 acolytes were trampled underfoot.

Don't Cry Award to Metallica's James Hetfield for his petulant reaction to Bob Mack's (rather reasonable) SPIN profile.

Most Popular Singer in America/Most Boring Man in America (joint award) to Garth Brooks.

Memorex Reproduction Award to retrovaudevillians The Black Crowes.

Ebony and Ivory Award for services to racial harmony: Ice Cube.

"Do You Have the New McDonald's Jingle on CD?" Award to "I'm Down With MTV." MTV nonpersonalities mouth butt-licking lyrics, plumbing new depths of self-promotion. And you thought Gerardo sucked. . . .

No Town Like Motown–U.S. Auto Industry Award to Michael Jackson for his shot in the arm for windshield manufacturing.

The award for **Kindness to Aging Punk Rockers** goes to, jointly, the Clash and Generation X for not having reformed (so far). Runner-up: Buzzcocks for reforming and not being embarrassing.

The "Girls, the good news is, your dates have arrived, the bad news is . . ." Award: N.W.A.

The award for **Services to the Former East German Auto Industry** goes to U2 for its selfless promotion of the Trabant saloon.

The award for **Self-Importance Beyond the Call of Duty** goes to Sting for releasing a cardboard box containing a book of his lyrics and a third-rate, five-track live EP for the piffling sum of $50.

The award for **Devotion to Family and Friends** goes to Madonna for her unselfish use of close relatives and acquaintances as props in *Truth or Dare*. Runner-up: La Toya Jackson, for her thoughtful portrayal of her brother as an abused lunatic in her autobiography.

The award for **New Contributions to Graffiti Art** goes to Richie from Welsh nouveau punk rockers Manic Street Preachers for carving 4REAL onto his own arm with a razor blade.

The award for **New Ideas in Conservation** goes to Madonna for trying to dispose of an empty Evian water bottle by swallowing it whole.

Capitalist Tool Award to M.C. Hammer, sorry, *Hammer*. The doll, the cartoon, the videos, the budget. Had enough yet?

The award for **Frankness and Honesty** goes to Genesis for naming its new album *We Can't Dance*. If this trend continues, future albums by Phil Collins's hobby band will be called *We Can't Write Songs, Either* and *Our Lyrics Are Dreadful*.

The award for **Reviving Surrealism in Popular Music** goes to the KLF for choosing to rerecord its song "Justified and Ancient" with country legend Tammy Wynette.

The award for **Most Casual Murder of Great Soul Songs** goes, jointly, to Michael Bolton and his rendition of "When a Man Loves a Woman" and the Commitments for their entire soundtrack LP.

MARTIN MAYO

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